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# NOTTINGHAM QUARTERLY

# 2

SUMMER 1978

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**Alan Sillitoe: No name in the street**

**PAGES 22-38**



IN NOTTINGHAM QUARTERLY 3

Published on Saturday, 9th September

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Ray Gosling: Troggs at Matlock

John Lucas: Henry Kirke White

Cliff Lee: Six Hands in Tempo

Al Atkinson: Don Chaffin, artist of nostalgia

Tony Bird: The domestic desert

Sam Peet: Corporate management & the local council

Malcolm MacIntyre-Read: Framework knitting

Geoffrey Oldfield: Off the beaten track

Alan Spooner: Children's literature and politics

Margaret Hurd: Interview with Christopher Bruce

Mike Williams: Profile of Sylvia Miles

with a cinematic cartoon sequence by Navvie Brick

and poems by Stewart Brown, Derrick Buttress,

Pamela Lewis and Stanley Middleton

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The next issue of Nottingham Quarterly will appear on Saturday, 9th September 1978, and thereafter every two months on the second Saturday of the month (see page 3). Unsolicited manuscripts, drawings and photographs are welcome, but will not be acknowledged or returned unless accompanied by a stamped, addressed envelope.



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## EDITORS' COMMENT

KEEPING A SMALL MAGAZINE AFLOAT is as easy as sailing a sieve. There are precedents, of course, but it is unlikely that the Jumbies or even the First Witch in "Macbeth" impressed their bank managers. Although Nottingham Quarterly seems to have been appreciated by its readers, this interest was not reflected as widely as it might have been in the volume of sales and advertising, and it has therefore been necessary to change tack (though changing tack may not be quite the answer to sailing a sieve).

The present issue was originally planned to be almost half as long again. This has proved uneconomic, and so we have had to postpone a number of articles until the third issue. However, this will now be published earlier than first intended, on Saturday, 9th September, and publication will then be every two months on the second Saturday in the month. The fourth issue will therefore appear on Saturday, 11th November. Although the magazine will now appear six times a year, logically enough it will still be called Nottingham Quarterly.

We regret that the price will remain the same despite the reduced size, but the economics of magazine publishing are inexorable. Finance comes from three sources only: subsidy, advertising and sales - high sales at a low price or low sales at a high price. If Nottingham is to have a magazine which allows its contributors a certain seriousness and depth, it seems that readers will have to pay a relatively high price for it.

The present issue is good value nevertheless, worth the price if only for a brilliant Alan Sillitoe story, previously unpublished in this country - and there is much more. Reducing the number of pages has inevitably restricted the range a little, but there is still considerable variety, and over a number of editions the balance will remain the same.

It is our long-term aim to expand the magazine again if possible, but this will depend on how far sales and advertising improve. If any of our readers can help by finding advertising, we will be very grateful. Please contact John Sheffield at Nottingham 865885: the rates are extremely reasonable!

Another way in which readers could help would be to take out a subscription. As an incentive, we are offering a year's subscription (six issues) post-free. Please send cheques/P.O.s for £3.60 to Nottingham Quarterly, 44 Pyatt Street, Meadows, Nottingham. Existing subscribers will receive issues up to number six if they subscribed from the first issue, and up to issue number seven if they subscribed from the second issue at the old rate of £3.00 for four issues.



The Midland Group moved to a new visual arts complex in Nottingham's Lace Market in October, 1977. The Midland Group is one of the country's leading contemporary arts organisations showing painting, performance, crafts, film, photography, sculpture and prints. Within the scheme will be galleries, shops, a cinema, bar and restaurant facilities.

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## ON VIEW

# Looking at lighting

**BRIAN LOUGHBROUGH**

(This article continues a series in which experts look at items on public view in the Nottingham area. Brian Loughbrough is Arts Director, City of Nottingham Leisure Services.)

HAVING RECENTLY VISITED ANOTHER MUSEUM and realised afterwards how little I remembered of individual items, I thought I would try a particular method of looking at some of Nottingham's collections, choosing a theme. Of course, museum staff advocate "little and often" for museum visits, which is convenient enough for local folk, who can pick up what they missed on a future visit. Even on a once in a lifetime visit, however, it is a good idea to tie in a theme.

All this is a preamble to talking about windows, light and lighting, but I hope I shall also justify the case for choosing a linking theme to make the visit or series of visits more interesting and worthwhile. Light and access to it is fundamental to the design of our dwellings past and present, and equally to our places of work, whatever level of society we consider. In Nottingham terms, the theme of light can be followed in all our museums, in both the fabric of the buildings, all of which are listed, and in the exhibits themselves.

At Brewhouse Yard, the bedroom from the twisthand's home, where small windows, traditionally shaded by net curtains, give a shadowed, subdued effect, is enlivened by the oil lamp which is left burning. The effect is that of a soft, warm yellow, with a "feel" quite unlike the hard, unforgiving edge of much modern lighting. In this sort of museum, it is not only the individual object that is interesting but also the whole period and atmosphere that is created.

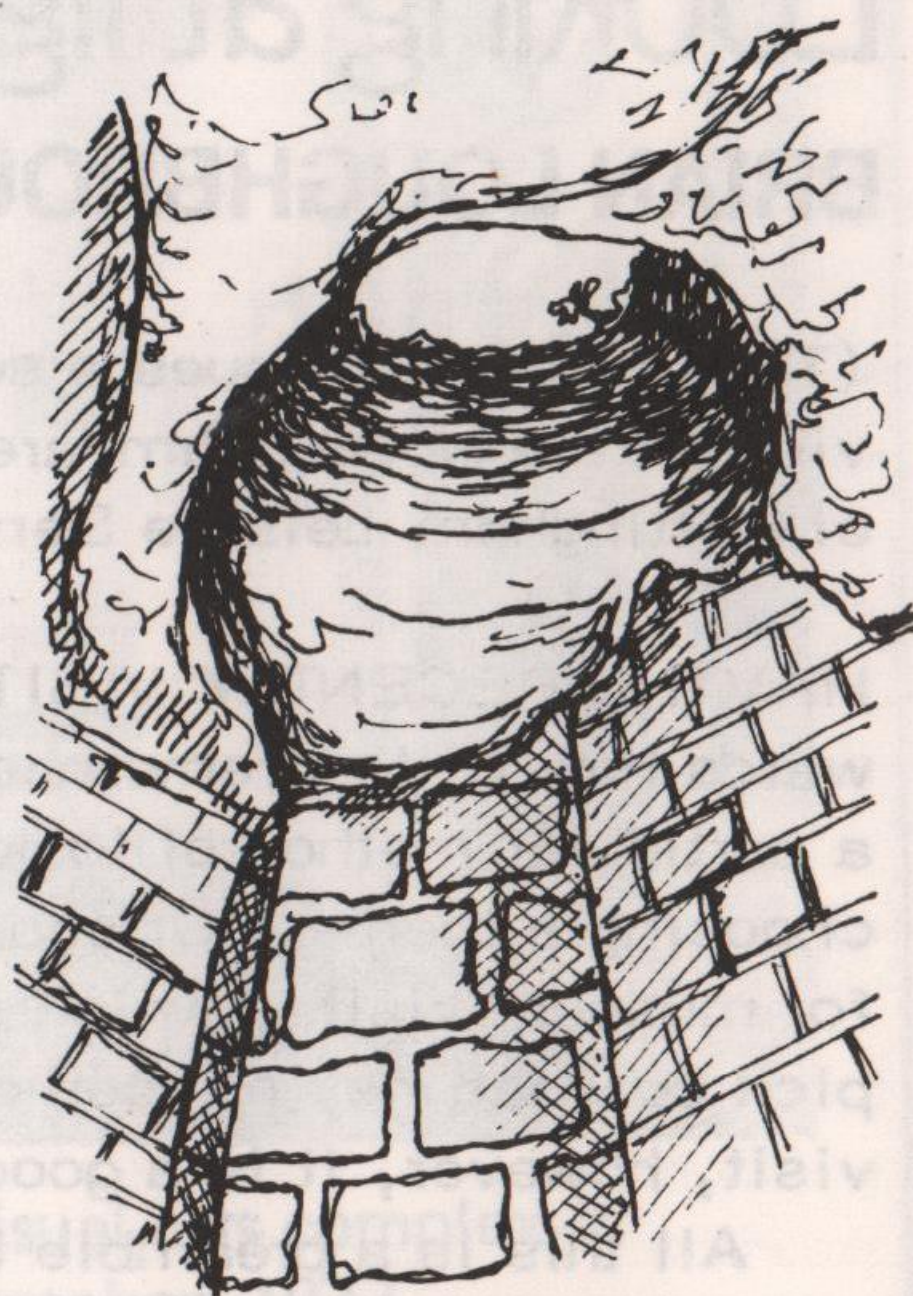
The right to light is also illustrated at Brewhouse Yard, where a model is displayed showing how, on a site between Park Street (now Friar Lane) and Hounds Gate, Thackeray's factory stopped the light from reaching a Mr Wood's house. The model was used as evidence in a law suit where Mr Wood sought redress for his loss of amenity. Poor man - one can see his point. In the same room is an oak window frame from a building that used to stand on the old Farmer's site off South Parade. Several similar frames can still be seen in situ in the town and the museum displays show where they can be found. Evidence is shown of windows blocked to avoid the window tax imposed in the late eighteenth century. In the present age, where building and planning regulations

require access to natural daylight, it seems odd that a tax should have been imposed on such an essential commodity.

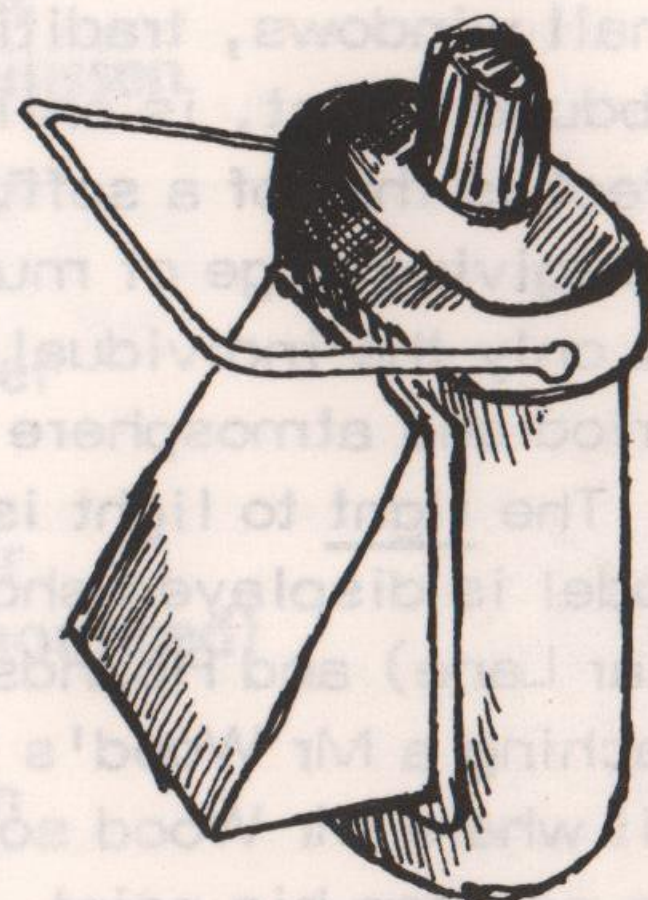
Indeed, people went to extraordinary lengths to gain access to light, as may be seen in the light well or chimney cut in the roof of one of the caves at Brewhouse Yard, or in the tiny window set in the stairway to give "borrowed light" to the pantry. Access to light varies from tiny windows at Brewhouse Yard to the magnificent glass walls of the Prospect Room at Wollaton Hall, where looking out was as important as receiving light in. The Willoughbys could look out as owners of much of what they surveyed, while at night the room could be seen as a great candle-lit lantern, the focus of its own local society.

A now curious aspect of light at Brewhouse Yard is found in the presentation of the World War Two material, where "Put out that light" and the blackout form the background to the story-line, supported by devices to collect and make safe incendiary bombs.

The variations in size, style and quality which occur in the case of window patterns, from the cathedral scale of Wollaton Hall to the humble elements of Brewhouse Yard, are repeated in the artificial means of providing light. Here again, Brewhouse Yard is the starting point. In the eighteenth century kitchen is a combined rush dip and candle holder. One of the cheapest forms of lighting was the rush dip. A soft, pithy rush could be impregnated with fat or tallow in a dipping pan. The dip could then be lit and moved up in the pincer claws of a metal holder as the rush burned. Attached to the upright is a candle holder. For special occasions, or when more light was required, a candle was inserted. Inns used to make a distinction in their charges between the provision of tallow dips and candles. In both



CHIMNEY CUT,  
BREWHOUSE YARD.



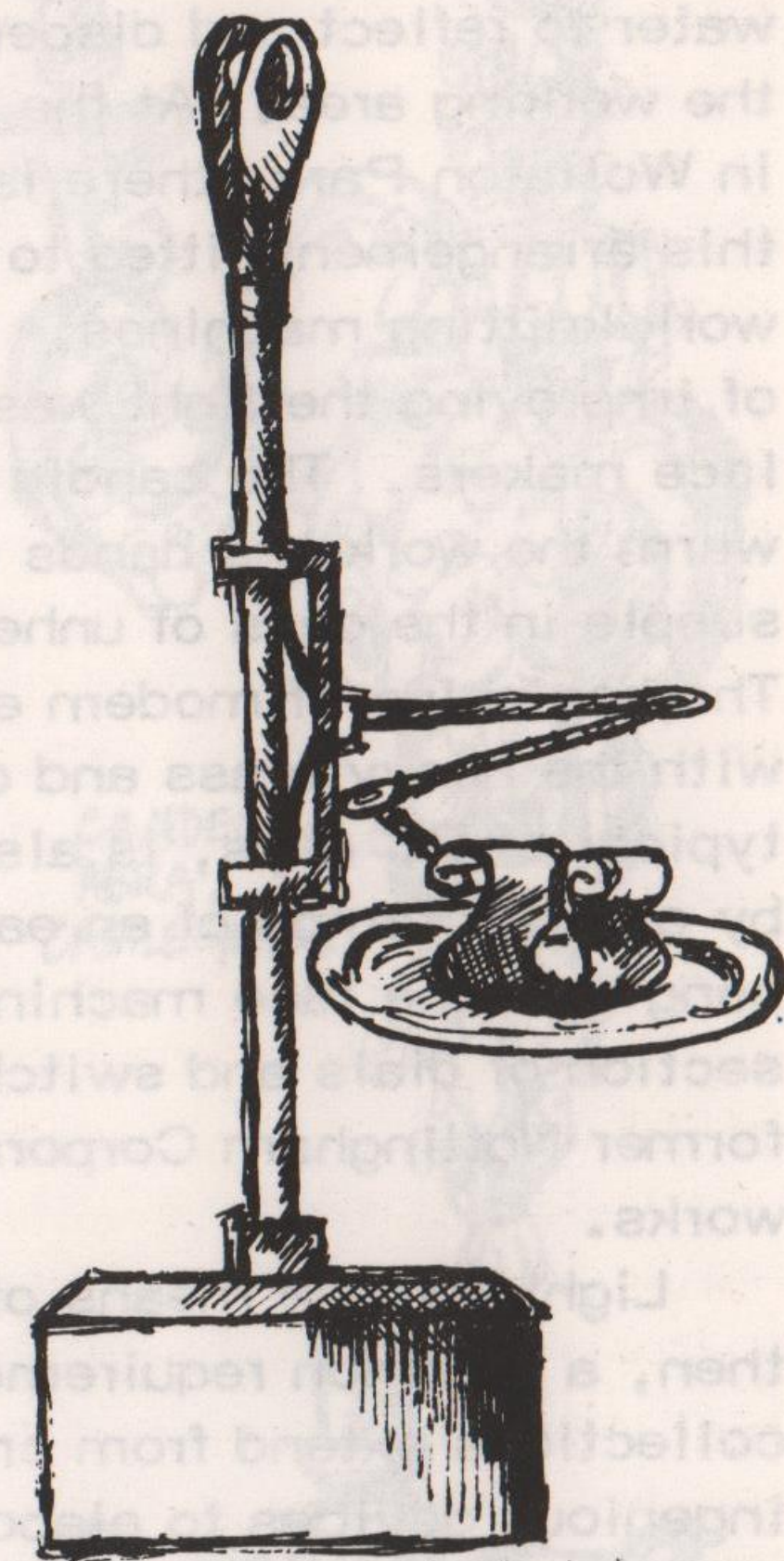
WORLD WAR II TORCH,  
BREWHOUSE YARD.

cases, however, the user was at the mercy of the quality of the substance burned. If it was crudely refined with animal or vegetable impurities, the air would be filled with smoke, the sound of sputtering flame and an unpleasant smell. The kitchen contains a boat-shaped pan for making dips.

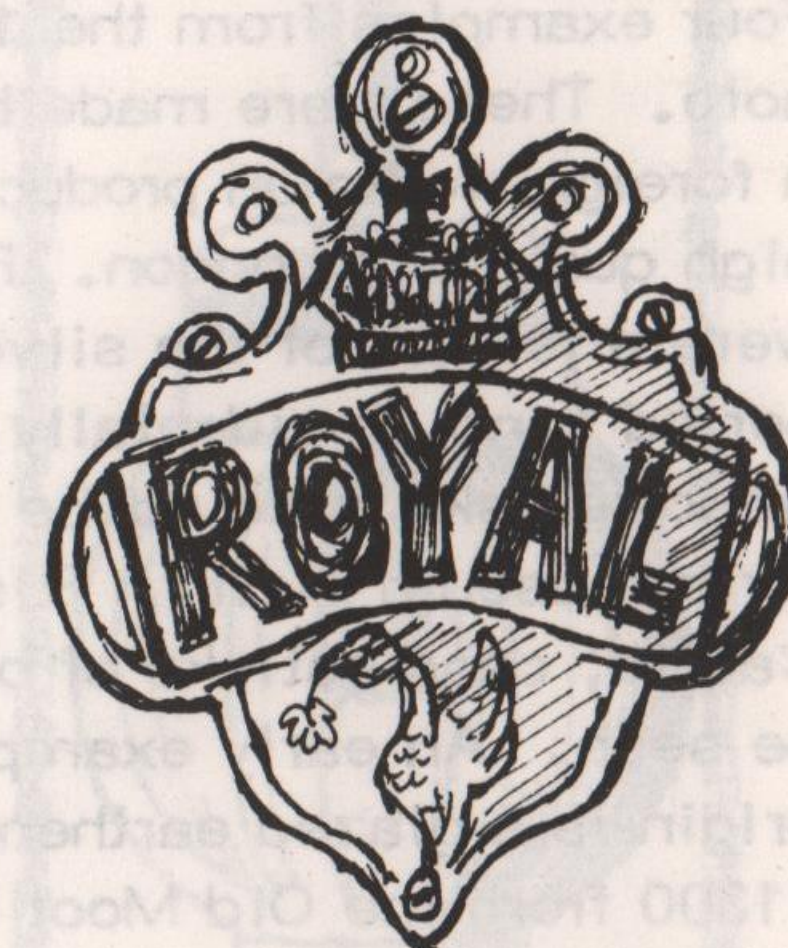
Unfortunately, our collections contain few good examples of oil lamps, which became important after 1847, following Young's discovery of the refining process for paraffin. The Victorian parlour, however, has an excellent example of the period. I can remember visiting my aunt in the country during and after the war and being given the job of filling and trimming the lamps, a daily task that could not be neglected. It is small wonder that, with dips, candles and oil lamps, almost all buildings of any antiquity have some history of fire. Incidentally, if you are interested in that alarming aspect of light, Brewhouse Yard has examples of early insurance company fire marks which were attached to buildings to guide the company engines to the premises which they held covered.

For town dwellers who could afford it, however, the nineteenth century brought an improvement and a new smell, the gas lamp. Gas lamps first appeared as simple flaming jets, and then in a more efficient form where the gas burned through an incandescent mantle within a decorative globe. In the nineteenth century kitchen at Brewhouse Yard, it is easy to recollect the soft hiss as the lever was pulled, followed by the soft "plop" when the match was applied to the mantle, which first had a tinge of red before the full strength of the light was attained.

Nottingham still has buildings with high level or attic workrooms with many windows to make the most of daylight; but work continued after dark and, in order to get the best



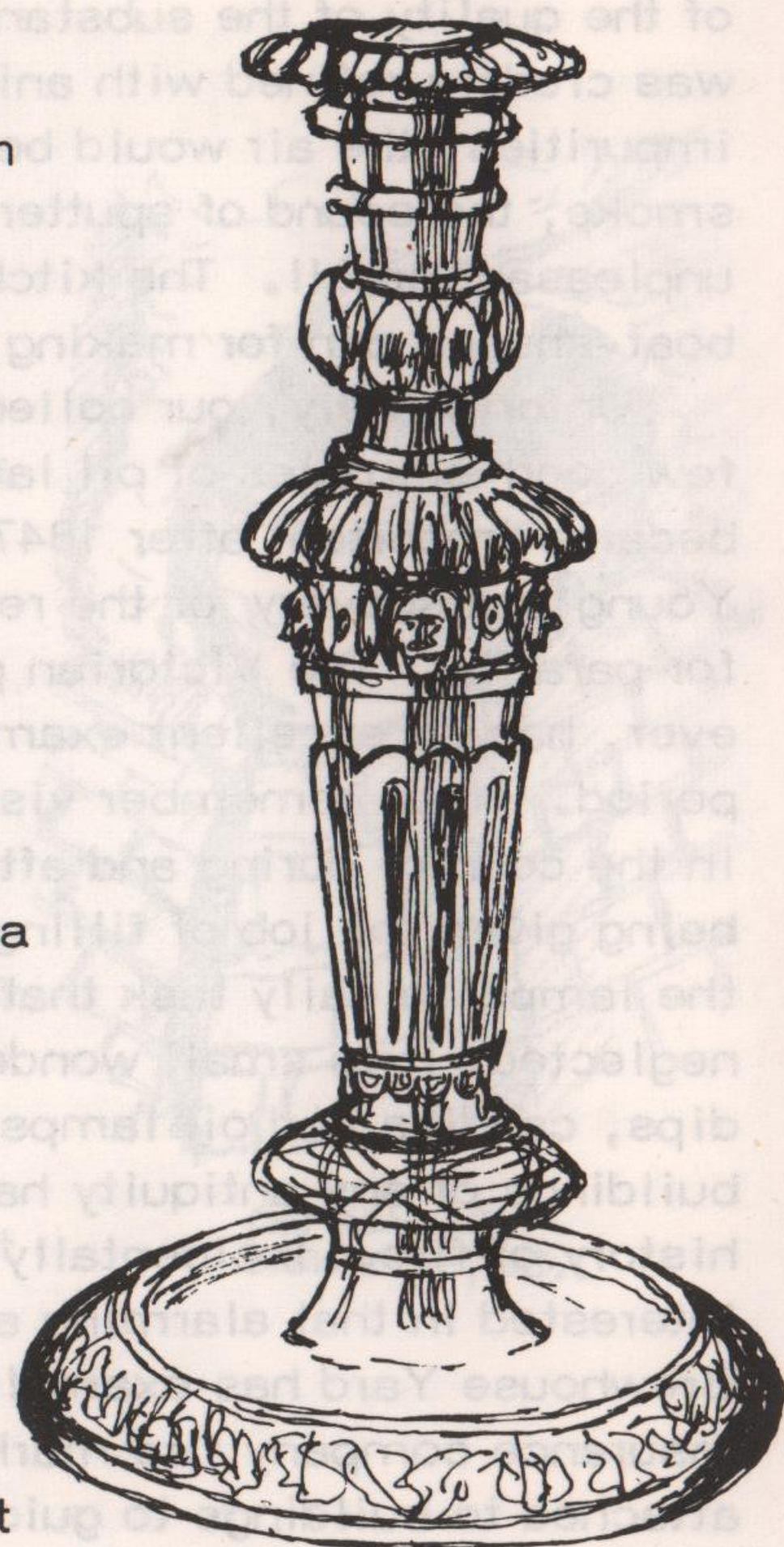
RUSH DIP + CANDLE HOLDER,  
BREWHOUSE YARD.



INSURANCE PLATE,  
BREWHOUSE YARD.

effects from expensive candles, some framework knitters used glass globes filled with water to reflect and disperse the light over the working area. At the Industrial Museum in Wollaton Park, there is an example of this arrangement fitted to one of the framework knitting machines. A similar method of improving the light was used by pillow lace makers. The candle also helped to warm the worker's hands and keep them supple in the days of unheated workrooms. The beginning of modern electric lighting, with the heavy brass and ceramic fittings typical of DC days, is also illustrated here by electric lamps of an early pattern which hang over the lace machinery, and there is a section of dials and switchgear from the former Nottingham Corporation Electricity works.

Light and the means of providing it is, then, a common requirement, and the collections extend from crude, cheap and ingenious devices to elaborate and sophisticated equipment executed in costly materials. In the Gibbs silver collection at the Castle, an important section is devoted to candle and taper sticks, snuffers and trays. Four examples from the 1690s are of special note. These were made by Charles Kandler, a foreign workman producing silver ware of high quality in London. Foreign workers were a feature of the silver trade at this period (and, incidentally, an examination of imported skills could be another "theme" for a museum visit). Elsewhere in the Castle, candlesticks of other materials can be seen. An early example of Nottingham origin is a glazed earthenware type dated c1300 from the Old Moot Hall site, while a later and more decorative design is to be found in the Wedgwood collection. Executed in the familiar blue jasperware, a candlestick emblematic of winter and dated 1785 shows the skills and improved technology



CANDLESTICK,  
GIBBS COLLECTION.



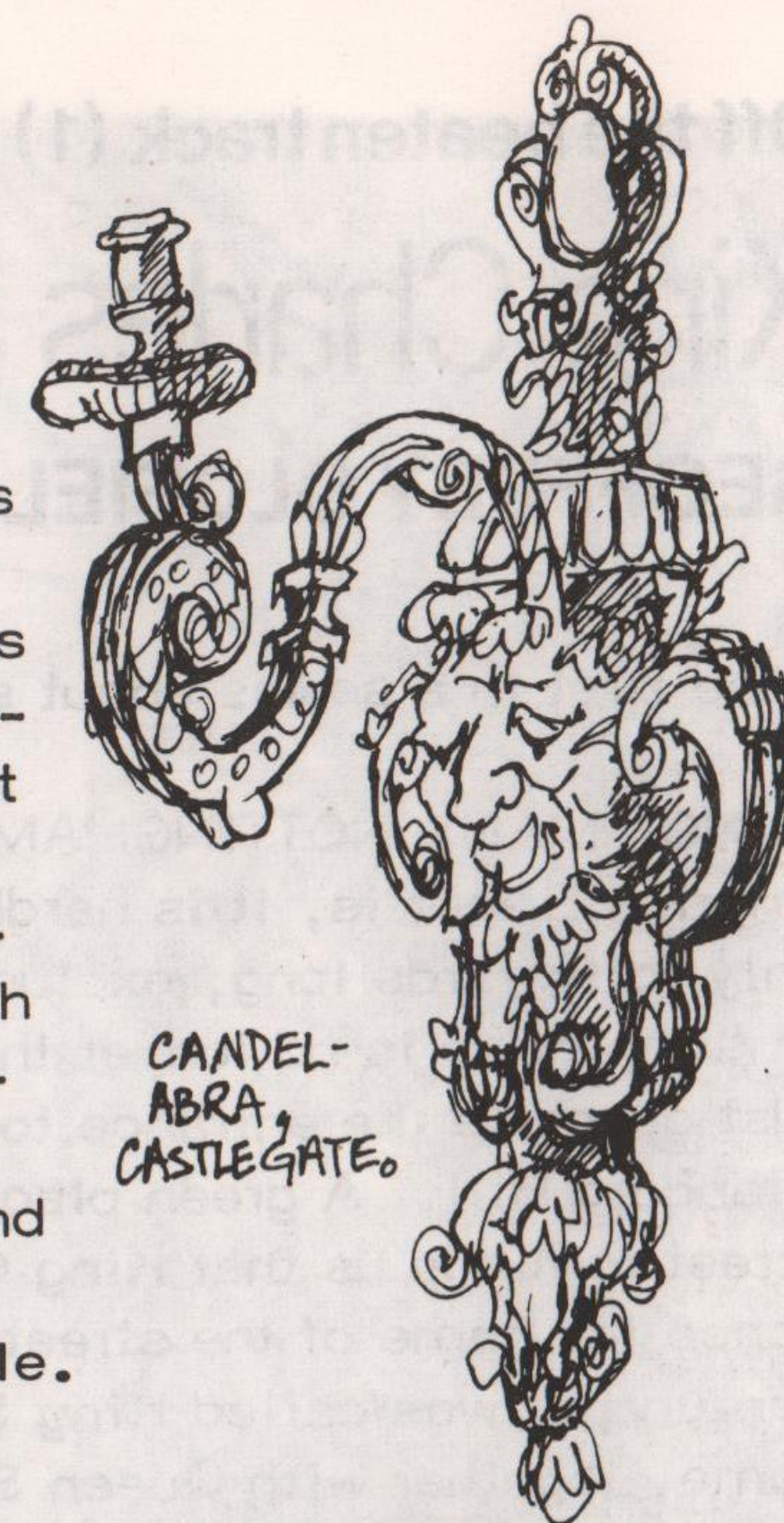
EARTHENWARE CANDLE-  
STICK, CASTLE MUSEUM.

that Wedgwood applied to the production of domestic objects not only for traditional patrons but also for the holders of the new wealth created in the beginnings of the industrial society.

The Costume Museum in Castle Gate has good examples of the lighting to be found in these wealthier households with wall sconces of the same period, c1790; while the recently completed room showing material of about 1830 has elaborate candelabra enhanced by adjacent mirrors. The next room to be completed later this year will be resplendent with a gasolier. Of all the special fittings, however, Newstead has the best, with two chandeliers, one from the Regency period and the other mid-nineteenth century in date, reputedly having come from Stornoway Castle. One of the post-Byron owners of Newstead, Colonel Webb, was so interested in modern lighting that he installed a gas plant in the estate near the present stable block. The equipment has gone, but the name survives in "Gas Lane".

A further step in the story is the way the properties of light are used to create patterns and images. The subject is introduced in Castle displays by camera obscura, kaleidoscopes and a zoetrope - but that leads to a whole new theme of light in pictures, and another article.

Light can be a linking theme for a museum visit, but if the experience has been a success it will lead to a further step, which will be, one hopes, a new look at things outside. Perhaps our interest will stay with the historical trail. Again Brew-house Yard suggests an idea, for outside in the grounds are two gas lanterns - electrified, I regret to say, but our quest for the real thing can soon be met in the Park, where gas lanterns survive. Even today, Nottingham streets contain a wide variety of standards and fittings as a further subject for enquiry.



CANDEL-  
ABRA,  
CASTLE GATE.



GAS LAMP,  
BREWHOUSE YARD.

Off the beaten track (1)

# King Charles Street

**GEOFFREY OLDFIELD**

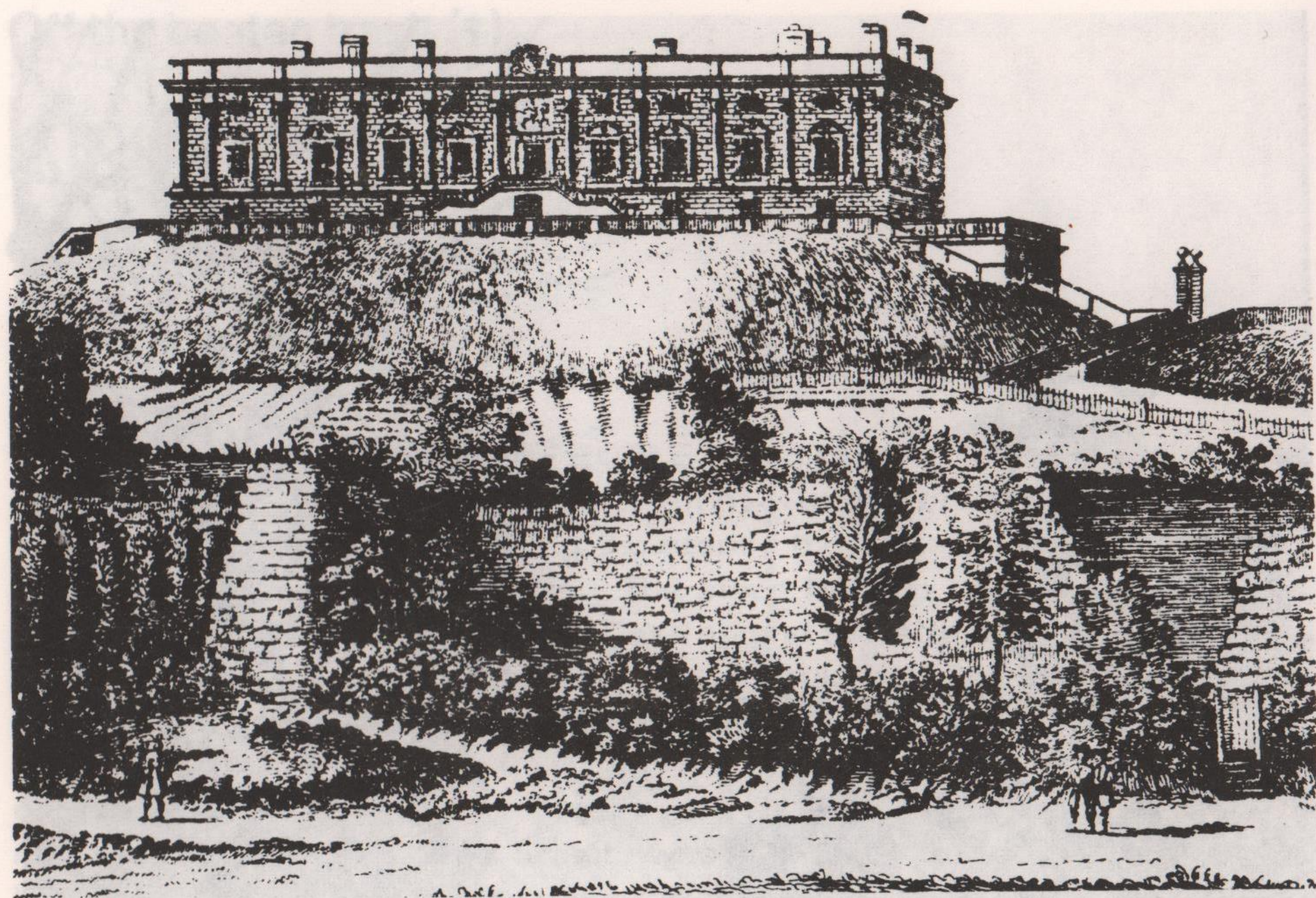
(The first in a series about some lesser-known parts of Nottingham.)

IF NOT MANY NOTTINGHAM PEOPLE could readily say where King Charles Street is, it is hardly surprising. Apart from the fact that it is only forty yards long, excluding the steps, the street name-plate shown in the picture is no longer there. The steps lead up from Lenton Road, just opposite the entrance to the Castle, and the street peters out at Standard Hill. A green plaque on the Georgian building at the end of the street reminds us that King Charles I raised his standard in 1642 nearby, hence the name of the street. Up to the latter part of the nineteenth century, it was called King Street, until the grander street of the same name, together with Queen Street, was laid out. The part of Standard Hill which now extends westwards towards the Nurses Home was at one time called Standard Street. It was then about twice as long as it is now and two streets led off it, Charles Street and Hill Street. King Street itself crossed over Standard Street for about another forty yards.

Until 1877, this part of Nottingham was outside the borough boundary and was extra-parochial, because it was part of the limits of what was formerly the royal castle. The chief advantage of being extra-parochial was that residents did not have to pay rates. It was mainly because the incumbents of the parishes in Nottingham could not influence the extra-parochial area that in 1808 St James's Church was built on land on the north side of Standard Hill. For twenty years before this, attempts had been made to set up a Chapel of Ease in Nottingham to further the evangelical movement, but this had been opposed by the incumbents of the three parishes of St Mary, St Peter and St Nicholas, who no doubt feared a loss of congregation and no doubt of fees. An Act of Parliament was eventually obtained to allow St James's, but marriages and funerals were not allowed there. It is rather ironic that the imposing large house to be seen to the right of the steps now houses two of the older parishes' ministers, as part is St Mary's Vicarage and part St Peter's Rectory, possibly a unique combination.

St James's Church itself was demolished in 1936 as the population drifted away from the centre of the city towards the suburbs. The name was transferred to a new church at Porchester.





(This month sees the centenary of Nottingham Castle. Trevor Dann has been finding out how much we all have to celebrate.)

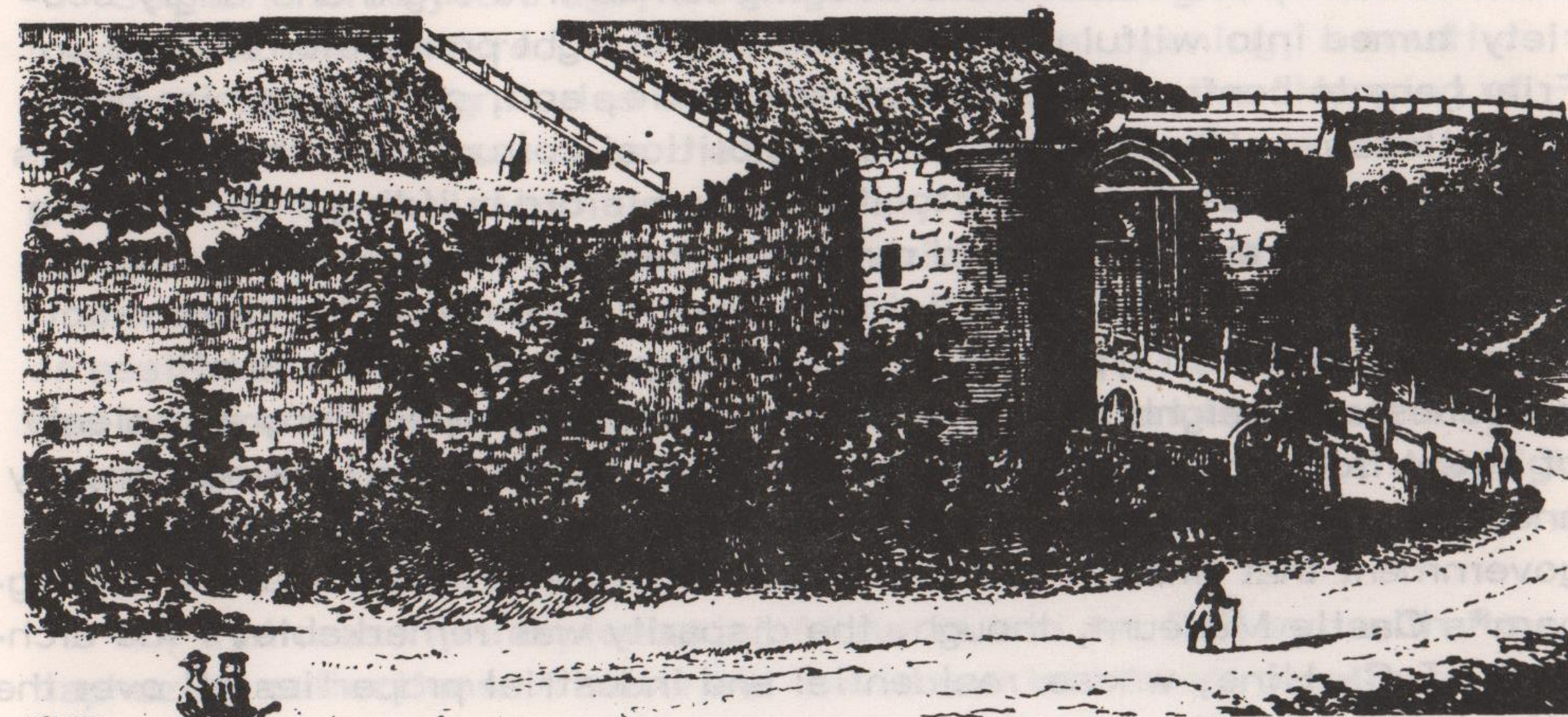
IT WAS APPROPRIATE THAT THE CITY FATHERS of a century ago should choose the well-known local bard Philip James Bailey, possibly Nottingham's answer to William McGonagall, to devise an ode on the occasion of the opening of the Midland Counties Museum of Art. He lumbered on through eighteen heroically dense verses, celebrating nine hundred years of Nottingham Castle's turbulent history (complete with "free-born outlaws, trooped 'neath Sherwood's tree"), which had now culminated in its new role as "an intellectual beacon burning bright". "Lift up now thy head, Art Fortress!" he enthused. "Let Saxon here then toil with Briton of the soil, in CULTURE that no time shall set aside."

It was amidst such excesses of municipal zeal, encouraged by the fashionable notion of improving the working classes' visual awareness, that the Prince of Wales arrived in July 1878 to inaugurate officially a new era for Nottingham's most famous symbol, as the very first provincial museum and art gallery.

The original impetus for this pioneering step had come from the South Kensington Museum in London. Every year, they received exhibits of lace designs from the College of Art in Nottingham, which so impressed them that they decided that the Queen of the Midlands was the ideal place to build a model of their operation. By collecting

# "Lift up now thy head, Art Fortress!"

TREVOR DANN



together a visual testimony to the moral virtues of the time, further stimulus would be given to the young designers. What appealed to the corporation, though, was a little less idealistic. They could see the advantages this would hold for the city's industry, still dominated by the lace trade, and they followed the Athenæum in believing that "every shilling expended by Nottingham in this work will be rendered back ten thousand fold in the improvement and probably the opening out of new branches of manufacture".

Moreover, however bizarre the scheme might be, it was at least a solution to one of the city's most pressing environmental problems. Throughout the fifty years of Queen Victoria's reign, Nottingham Castle had stood as an ugly reminder of less "enlightened" days. During the early nineteenth century, it had been a political power base for the reactionary Duke of Newcastle, who owned the parliamentary seats for the town. But it was precisely to remove these areas of hitherto constitutionally acceptable privilege that the Whigs in Westminster drafted what became known as the Reform Bill. In addition, a few skilled working men would be given the vote, and, of course, this was too much for the Duke of Newcastle and his Tory colleagues, who thought the system of "pocket boroughs" allowed political influence to rest with those most likely to treat it in a responsible (i.e. conservative) way. So the Duke became a leader of the parliamentary opposition to this



mild measure and an object of scorn from the restless, if not revolutionary, workers in Nottingham.

When Parliament threw out the Bill in the autumn of 1831, working-class tempers all over Britain exploded, and, as soon as the mail coach bringing the news from London arrived in the Market Square, a mob gathered with their eyes focused on that symbol of oppression staring down at them, the Castle. As evening turned into night and angry sobriety turned into wilful drunkenness, a torchlight procession headed up Friar Lane to confront the Duke of Newcastle, and, on finding him out (doubtless revelling in the spoils of political corruption), the protestors used their torches to set fire to the venerable old building. By morning it was gutted, and so it would remain for half a century.

Once the notion of a prestigious corporation amenity had taken root, it was pursued with typical Victorian energy. There were lots of speeches and weighty treatises on the value of the operation, and plenty of sweat from corporation workmen, but two things were lacking - money and foresight. Of course, it is a common tale in the history of local government that finance fails to match ambition. In the case of Nottingham's Castle Museum, though, the disparity was remarkable. The architect, T.C. Hine, whose residential and industrial properties all over the city drew international praise, was not to blame; but he was given an almost impossible job, and his conversion of the burned-out shell is the great aberration in his successful career. He decided, for instance, that the galleries should be large and tall, and that there should be two floors. This would have been more acceptable if the Castle had not been a three-storey building. Hine also chose to remove the tightly articulated steps from the main entrance and erect a covered walkway which would provide discreet cover for the public lavatories. You can still see the old front door today, peeking over the top of the canopy.

Such extraordinary plans might have been forgivable if the Duke of Newcastle's house had been particularly ugly in the first place. It may indeed have appeared so to Victorian eyes, but in fact it was a remarkable example of a seventeenth-century Italian-style prospect building, built in 1674-79 to replace the medieval castle demolished at the end of the Civil War in 1651. The new building had a magnificent pillared façade; and was deliberately designed to be just twenty-five feet wide so that it formed virtually a screen across the rock. As the model in the Museum today shows so vividly, it was fashionably low, and intended to blend in with the surroundings and afford picturesque views from every angle. Its original architect, justifiably proud of the first design of its type in England, would turn in his grave if he could see his delicate sash windows vandalised by Hine's gross stone mullions and sliced in half by the gallery floors.

Even before its destruction by fire, though, the grand seventeenth

century home, whose outer walls are still with us, led anything but a full life. The Duke of Newcastle rarely slept there, and at one time the entire building was inhabited by one old lady living alone with a baboon! The Victorian effort at "improvement", both of the fabric of the Castle and the minds of the lace designers, was at least a move in a positive direction.

So, a hundred years ago, Nottingham was buzzing with talk of this marvellous new venture. Even before the official opening, a small audience of civic dignitaries was invited to celebrate the "Hanging of the First Picture", but, once the public had been admitted, there was a profound sense of disappointment. First, the paying customers were somewhat disenchanted with the quite evident fact that this was a museum with very few exhibits and none of much value, either financial or aesthetic. But second, within a few years, Nottingham's industry had become almost entirely concentrated on the manufacture of bicycles, cigarettes and drugs - none of which was very susceptible to those high-flown notions of inculcating and enshrining visual and moral values, which were always fanciful at best.

For that reason, the pioneering Museum and Art Gallery, with its haphazard collections of historical trivia and indifferent paintings, was a dinosaur within a generation. The problem the last quarter of the twentieth century has to solve is precisely the same one that has faced the owners of the Castle now for a thousand years - what on earth to do with it.

The Castle sits on top of its rock today a symbol of Victorian idealism that did not wholly fail but was perhaps too successful. The experiment of 1878 was doomed from the start, but later generations have modified the Victorian vision and converted it, so that artifacts are now considered to be worth preserving and exhibiting for their own sake - a step forward which would have been inconceivable a century ago. In Nottingham, however, these developments are manifesting themselves in the Industrial Museum, the Costume Museum and the new Social History Museum, which have been reared by the Castle and moved on. Nowadays, the mother museum watches her fledglings struggle to attract visitors in this television age, and, knowing herself unsuitable for such a task, feels her life's work done. Far from improving the balance of payments, she has herself become a burden, however valuable, on the ratepayer.

So what do we do with the venerable old girl now? We could follow the Civic Society in advocating more extensive excavations to make the grounds themselves more interesting. Or we could even gut the building again, restore the seventeenth century walls and excavate the floor. It has been suggested that we could convert it into a concert hall - but this sounds ominously like where, a century ago, we came in.

# Tennessee Williams in Nottingham

## MIKE WILLIAMS

(Tennessee Williams was in Nottingham from May 10th-12th to see the British première of "Vieux Carré" at the Playhouse. Mike Williams looks at the play and the personality behind it.)

YOU CAN EASILY MAKE THE CONNECTIONS between Tennessee Williams, the kind of life he has lived and his twenty-five full-length plays for the theatre. But the connections have to be made very carefully. The more facile are easily rehearsed, but then it is necessary to ask why in recent years he has become a remarkable example of failure to confront the tragic implications of his own material.

His life-style might well lead an audience to expect whiffs of ruined Southern grandeur, matriarchs with strong personalities, beautiful young men with sexual hang-ups, junkies, consumptives and drifters - it is sometimes said that Tennessee Williams is like a character out of one of his own plays. That is facile. It might be more accurate to say, as he himself has occasionally admitted, that many of his characters are projections of his own personality.

I take that to be an unwitting indication of weakness. Mr Williams said at the press conference which preceded the Nottingham Playhouse production of "Vieux Carré" that his "chief requirement" of a person is that he "doesn't interrupt me at work or annoy me when I go to bed"; that writing is the dominant activity in his life; and that he is a solitary man. He was confirming for me an impression conveyed by much of his published work and by what I have read of his life - that, with the exception of several female relatives and friends, he has not engaged other people at a particularly intense level; hence the increasingly obtrusive thinness of the human material in his recent plays. The overwhelming sense in "Vieux Carré" is that this property is déjà vu.

The young Writer announces at the end of the play that he has said goodbye to the people of "Vieux Carré" and that they are ghosts in his memory. If you take the parallel between the Writer and Mr Williams literally, they are ghosts from former plays as well. Miss Carrie and Miss Maude, two genteel old ladies starving in a room somewhere in the depths of the boarding house, are a wierd late variation on Grace and Cornelia in "Something Unspoken". Tye and Jane used to be called Val and Lady from "Orpheus Descending" and, more importantly, Stanley and Blanche from "A Streetcar Named Desire". They are yet another variation on the pairing of a glamorous, linguistically self-conscious woman



and a narcissistic, inarticulate but sexually athletic young man. The treatment of this relationship in "Vieux Carré" reveals how far we are now from the world of the earlier plays. In 1978, Tye can demonstrate his "animal magnetism" in a fairly explicitly staged rape of Jane, but the visuals are not spectacular. They are rather tired, as is the writing. The dynamic conflict between Stanley and Blanche, which reaches unbearably tragic dimensions, has here degenerated into a series of carefully contrived glimpses in which the "literary" style of Jane is so self-conscious as to be risible, and the "animal" qualities of Tye are no more than the arch, obscene posturings of an Italian gigolo.

Interestingly, the Writer is confronted in the boarding house by a homosexual painter, Nightingale, who, despite imminent disablement by consumption, seduces him. Even in 1978, such a relationship is subject to the imagined restrictions of public taste where the relationship between Jane and Tye is not. The Writer and Nightingale (both, surely, projections of Mr Williams himself) are presented with an authenticity and a tension which lifts their relationship above the tired melodramatics of the Tye/Jane scenario. Perhaps this is a playwright for whom the greater freedoms of the theatre have not been a benefit. He agreed at the press conference that the censorship of his early plays had been intensely frustrating. What a pity that he uses the freedoms of 1978 so wantonly. There were times in the Nottingham Playhouse production when the main motive for yet another return to Jane's battle with Tye seemed to be a progressive striptease by the young stud.

"Vieux Carré" is not only a tired reworking of favourite material. That is only one reason for the loss of power. It is also a loosely structured, impressionistic work in which any power which may be generated in one area of the boarding house is quickly dissipated in some very obvious and very clumsy bridging to another area, another set of problems. The format is used in an earlier play, "Small Craft Warnings", where the single setting, a bar, concentrates the diffuse experience of the human flotsam washed up there to suffer, and there is a stunning use of dramatic monologue to convey quite memorable, solitary anguishes. Ironically, the monologues of "Small Craft Warnings" show Tennessee Williams adopting one of the most important developments in modern American theatre and using it quite brilliantly on a small scale. It seems a great pity that he has left it to others, in "Chorus Line" and "Kennedy's Children" especially, to exploit the confessional monologue to the full as a viable alternative to the conventions of dialogue and narrative structure.

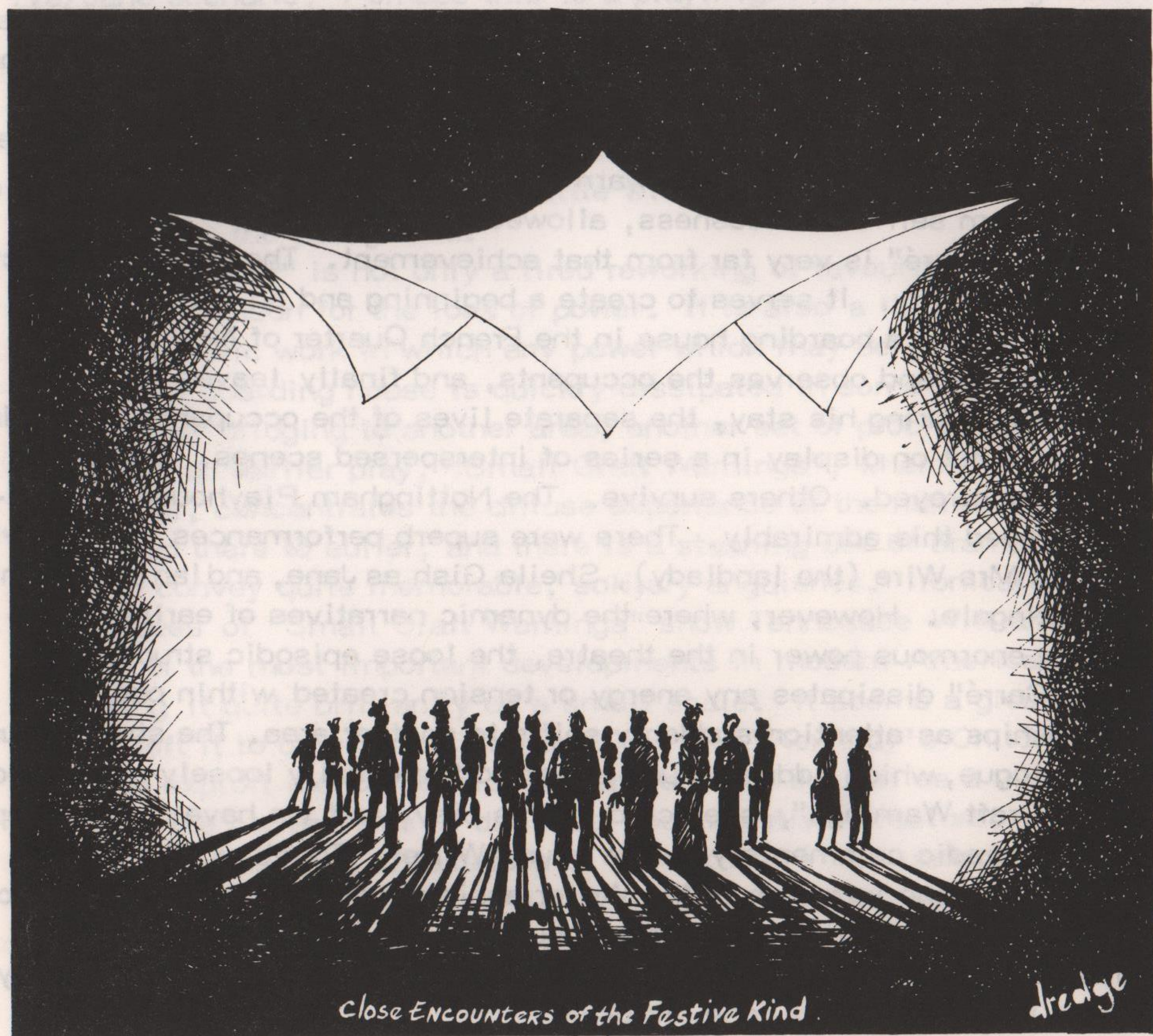
The tiredness and diffuseness of "Vieux Carré" are undoubtedly related not only to the rejection of all but the most perfunctory narrative structure, but also to a marked weakening of Mr Williams's attitudes. He was asked at the press conference about his "pessimism". He told us that he has no fear of death and that "eminence is just a matter of hard work and

survival and things like that". The emphasis clearly is on "surviving". But in the earlier narratives only some survive. Others are inevitably destroyed. Hence the tragic power of "Sweet Bird of Youth", "Orpheus Descending" and "A Streetcar Named Desire". The narrative structures bring together forces of such terrifying opposition that their confrontation seems as inevitable as the destruction of one party by the other. And the characters of the earlier plays do not set out to survive - they grab desperately for the "infinitely varied narcotics" of the life process which are available before death begins its "inevitably fatal operation". They really are locked in the most primaevial of struggles to reveal that "something much bigger in life and death than we have become aware of (or adequately recorded) in our living and dying". (The quotations are from a New York Times article written by Mr Williams in 1959.) The earlier plays are shamelessly romantic, and it is small wonder that Mr Williams spoke so warmly of D.H. Lawrence at the press conference. It is a matter for more than regret that there was a time when Tennessee Williams could so beautifully recreate in the theatre a powerful arena for the conflict between animal vitality and decaying sexuality as the mere groundswell for the tragic intrusions of all the falsities generated by the human consciousness. And he could feel certain to achieve as nearly as possible the stated aims of his drama: "Our hearts are wrung by recognition and pity, so that the dusky shell of the auditorium where we are gathered anonymously together is flooded with an almost liquid warmth of unchecked human sympathies, relieved from self-consciousness, allowed to function."

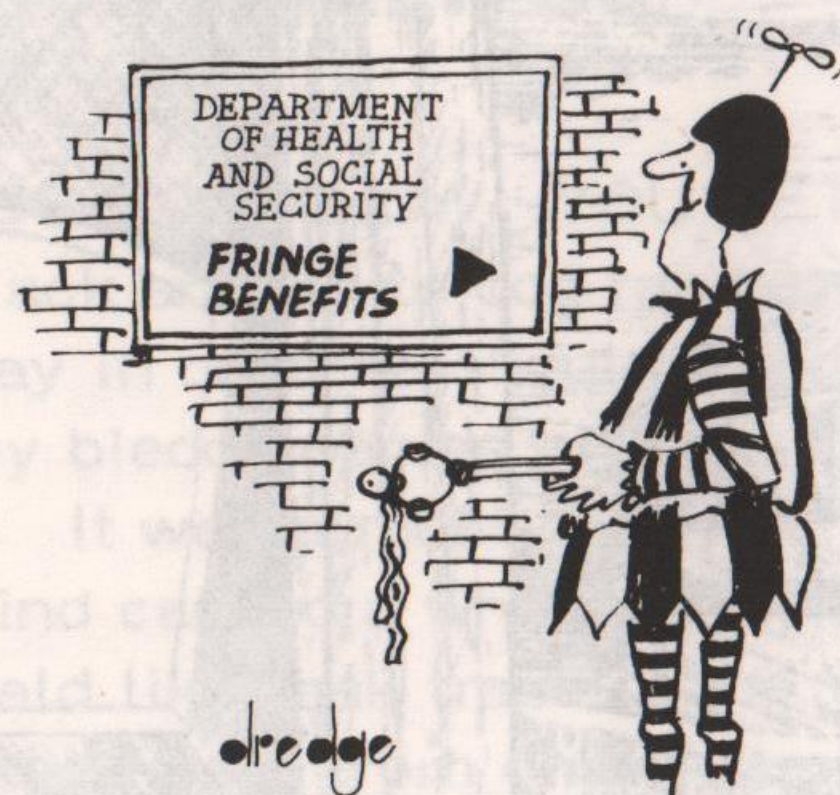
"Vieux Carré" is very far from that achievement. The narrative structure is perfunctory. It serves to create a beginning and an end. A young writer arrives at a boarding house in the French Quarter of New Orleans. He encounters and observes the occupants, and finally leaves for a life elsewhere. During his stay, the separate lives of the occupants, some in crisis, are put on display in a series of interspersed scenes. Some are partially destroyed. Others survive. The Nottingham Playhouse production conveyed this admirably. There were superb performances from Sylvia Miles as Mrs Wire (the landlady), Sheila Gish as Jane, and Ian McDiarmid as Nightingale. However, where the dynamic narratives of earlier plays generate enormous power in the theatre, the loose episodic structure of "Vieux Carré" dissipates any energy or tension created within one set of relationships as attention suddenly shifts to another area. The stunning use of monologue, which adds so much power to the equally loosely structured "Small Craft Warnings", is rejected in this play, and we have only a limply written sporadic commentary by the young Writer. Together, the loose structure and the intrusion of the Writer achieve not the unchecked flow of sympathy prized in the earlier plays, but a positive alienation of the audience, who are reduced to a group of intruders, no matter how warmly invited, into a series of case histories.

# Festival postscript

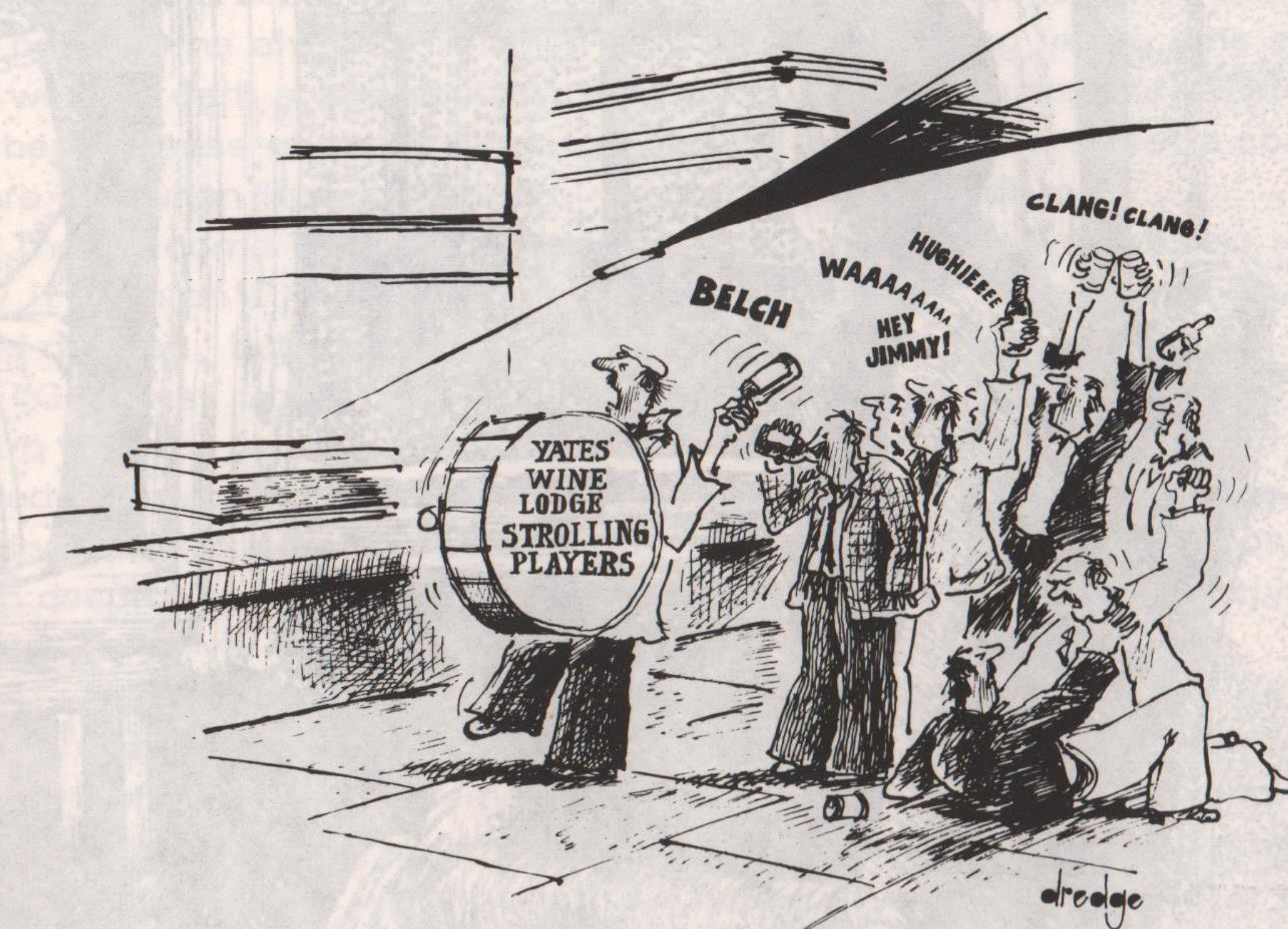
PETE DREDGE



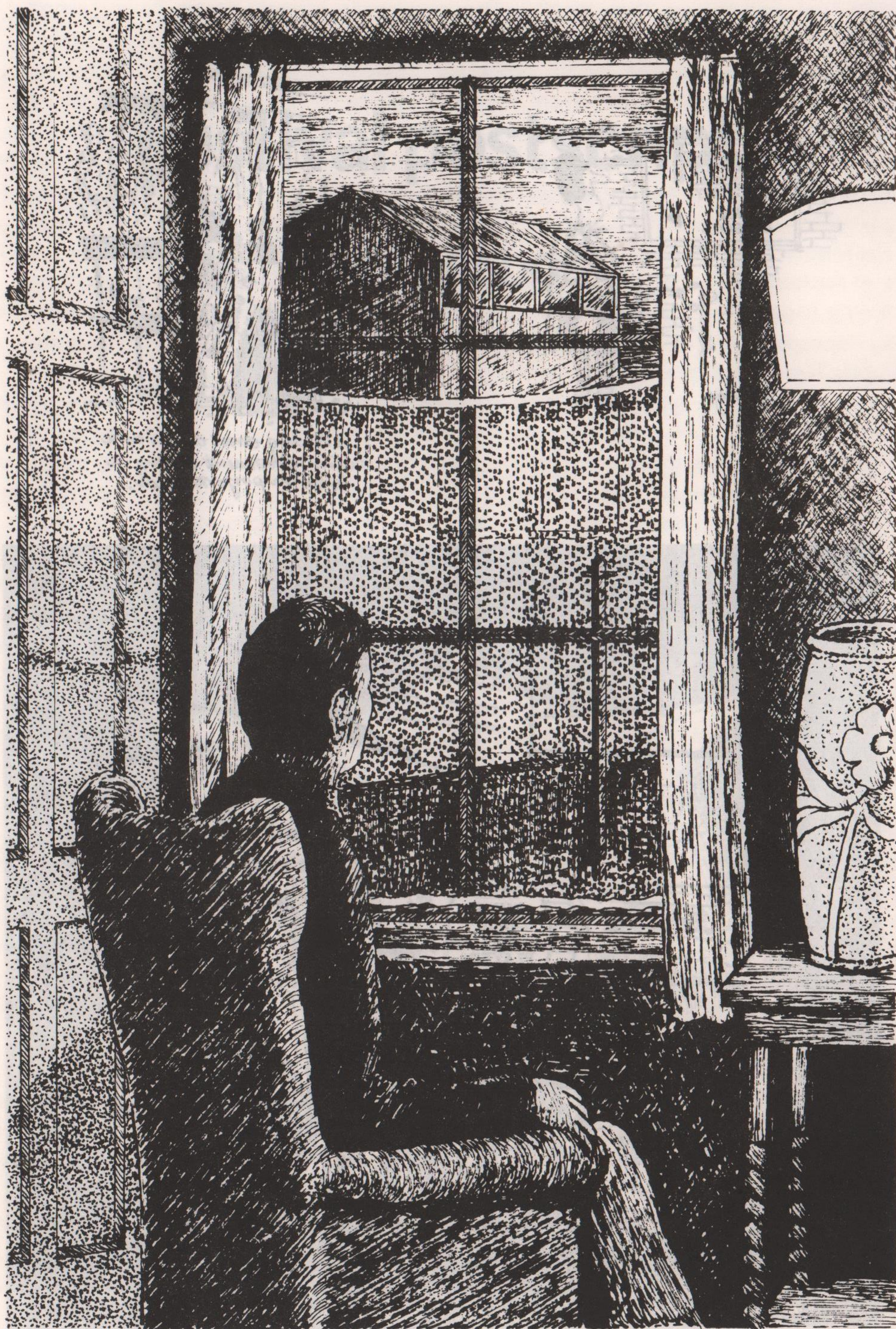
Close Encounters of the Festive Kind



A leading street theatre critic taking refreshment during a break in performances.



Festival Fringe street theatre World Premiere of Bert Sornshaw's 'Drunk and Disorderly'



# No name in the street

ALAN SILLITOE

"DO YOU KNOW, YOU GET on my bloody nerves, you do." Albert's black and white dog ran between his feet, making him scuffle out of the way in case he should tread on it and commit an injury. "You've got on my bleddy nerves all day."

It was almost dark when they set out for the golf course. A cool wind carried a whiff of hay from large square bales scattered about the field like tank traps in the War when, as a youth in the Home Guard, he used to run from one to another with a rifle in his hand. It smelled good, the air did. He hadn't noticed in those distant days whether it had smelled good or not. Or perhaps he didn't remember. But you could tell it had been a hot day today because even though the wind had a bit of an edge to it the whiff of hay was warm. "You do, you get on my bleddy nerves."

The dog quickened its pace, as if a bit more liveliness would mend matters. And Albert lengthened his stride, not in response to the dog but because he always did when he made that turning in the lane and saw the wood's dark shape abutting the golf course. His dog anticipated this further increase of speed: having been pulled in off the street a couple of years ago when it was starving, it couldn't afford not to.

They'd come this way on most nights since, so there was no reason why it shouldn't know what to do. Why it got on his nerves so much he'd no idea, but what else could you expect from a dog?

"Get away from my feet, will yer?" His voice was little more than a sharp whisper because they were so near. The "will yer?" - which he added with a certain amount of threat and venom - caused the dog to rub against his trousers and bounce off, then continue walking, almost in step despite both sets of legs still perilously close. "You'll drive me up the pole, yer will. My nerves are all to bits."

It wasn't a cold evening, following a hot day at the end of June, but he wore a long dark-blue overcoat, a white nylon scarf, and a bowler hat, more because he was familiar with them than to keep warm. He felt protected and alive inside his best clothes, and in any case he usually put them on when he left the house in the evening, out of some half-surfaced notion that if anything happened so that he couldn't get back home then at least he'd be in clothes that would last a while, or fetch a bob or two at the ragshop if he had to sell 'em.

There was no reason why he should be this way, but that didn't make it less real. Apart from which, he couldn't go to the golf course

wearing his shabby stuff. The adage that if you dressed smart you did well was about the only useful advice his father had ever tried to tell him, though it was so obvious a truth that it would have made no difference had he kept his trap shut, especially since neither he nor his father had ever done well at anything in their lives.

"Here we are, you aggravating boggler." He stopped at the fence, then turned to the dog which, as always at this point, and for reasons best known to itself, hung back. "Don't forget to follow me in."

No hole was visible, but Albert knew exactly where it was. He got down on his haunches, shuffled forward, and lifted a strand of smooth wire. The dog saw him vanish. When he stood up in the total blackness of the wood, he heard the dog whine because it was still on the wrong side of the fence.

It showed no sign of coming through to join him, even though it was a job so much easier for a dog than a man. At least you might have thought so, but the bleddy thing was as deaf as a haddock when it came to telling it what to do. It hesitated so long that, after a suitable curse, Albert's pale bony hand at the end of his clothed arm at last appeared under the fence, grabbed it by the collar (you had to give the damned thing a collar, or somebody else might take it in) and yanked it through, briars and all.

It didn't yelp. Whatever happened was no more than it expected. "You get on my bleddy nerves," Albert said, holding its wet nose close, and staring into its opaque apologetic eyes.

When he walked along the invisible path he knew that the dog was obediently following. They went through the same haffle-and-caffle every time, and it got on his nerves no end, but it would have chafed them even more if the dog had done as it was supposed to do, because in that case Albert might not even know it was there; and then there'd be no proof that he had any nerves at all worth getting on. He often told himself that there was at least some advantage in having such a mongrel.

He could do this zig-zag walk without cracking twigs, but the dog rustled and sniffled enough for both of them, biting leaves as if there was a rat or ferret under every bush.

Albert hadn't felt right since his mother died three years ago, unable to work after losing her, finding that nobody would set him on anyway because they saw in his face that the guts had been knocked out of him. That's what he thought it was, and when he told them at the welfare that he felt he was on the scrapheap, they gave him money to keep the house and himself going.

It wasn't a bleddy sight. The dog was eating him out of house and home. Every time he had a slice of bread and marmalade he had to cut some for the dog as well. Same when he poured a cup of tea, he had to put a saucerful on the floor. So you had to do summat to earn a few

bob extra.

There was a bit of light in the wood now they'd got used to it, and when he reached the fence he saw that the moon was coming. It wasn't much of one, but it would be a help - without being too much of a hindrance. Sandpit holes in the golf course beyond glowed like craters. The dog ran into a bush, and came out more quickly than he'd expected, nudging his leg with something hard in its jaws. Albert bent down and felt cold saliva as he took it and put it into his pocket. "That's one, any road. Let's hope there'll be plenty more."

Occasionally when they found one so early it ended up a bad harvest. But you never knew. Life was full of surprises, and dreams. He had visions of coming across more lost golfballs than he could carry, pyramids that would need a wheelbarrow to take away. He saw a sandy depression of the golf course levelled off with them. He even had the odd picture of emerging from the wood and spotting a dozen or so, plain and white under the moon, and watching himself dart over the greenery, pocketing each one. In his dream, though, the golfballs seemed soft and warm in his fingers as he slipped them into his topcoat pocket.

The dog brought another while he smoked a fag, but ten minutes went by without any more. "All right," he said, "we'd better go and see what we can find. Best not get too close to the clubhouse: the boggers stay up boozing late enough in that cosy place they've got."

His dog agreed, went through the fence this time even before Albert had finished muttering, glad to be in the open again. They said next door that his mother had to die sometime. Not much else they could say, being as she was nearly eighty. She used to talk to him about his father, who had gone to work one day twenty-five years ago complaining of pains in his stomach, and not come back alive. Something about a ruptured ulcer, or maybe it was cancer. There was no point in caring, once it had happened. The doctor had been kind, but told them nothing - a man who looked at you with the sort of glittering eyes that didn't expect you to ask questions.

Then she went as well. He bent down one morning to look, and saw that she'd never wake up. He sat with her a few minutes before going to get the doctor, not realising till he got out of the door that he'd been with her ten hours in that long moment, and that dusk was beginning to glow up the cold street.

He was glad to be in the actual golf course because the wood was full of nettles, and brambles twisting all over the place. Stark moonlight shone on the grass so that it looked like frost. Even before he'd gone five yards the dog came leaping back, and pushed another ball into his hand, the sand still gritty on its nose. That was three already, so maybe a jackpot night was coming up, though he didn't like to think so, in case it wasn't. Perhaps he should hope it would turn out rotten, then

every find would be encouraging, though at the same time he'd feel a bit of a cheat if he ended up with loads. Yet he'd also be more glad than if he'd hoped it would finish well and it turned out lousy. He'd appear foolish sooner than lose his dream, though he'd rather lose his dream if it meant things seeming too uncomfortably real. The best thing was, like always, not to forecast anything, and see what happened.

Every golfball meant fifteen pence in his pocket from the second-hand shop, and some weeks his finds added up to a couple of quid on top of his social security. He earned more by it than when he used to hang around caddying as a youth of fourteen before the war. Every little had helped in those far-off days, but there'd been too many others at it. Things had altered for the better when he'd got taken on at Gedling Pit, because as well as getting work he was exempted from the army.

After the funeral he sat in the house wearing his best suit, and wondering what would happen to him now. Going for a walk in the milk-and-water sunshine he wandered near the golf course one day and saw a ball lying at his feet when he stopped to light a cigarette. He picked it up, took it home, and put it in a cut-glass bowl on the dresser. Later he went back looking for more.

He ran his fingers over the hard indented pattern, brushing off sand-grains and grassblades as they went along. It was an ordinary night, after all, because they found no more than four. "Come on, then, you slack bogger," he said to the dog. "Let's be off, or you'll be getting on my nerves again!"

"It's a good dog," he said, sitting at a table with his half pint of ale, "but it gets on my nerves a bit too much at times."

They wondered what nerves he had to get on, such an odd-looking, well-wrapped-up fifty-year-old whose little Jack Russell dog had followed him in. One of the railwaymen at the bar jokingly remarked that the dog was like a walking snowball with a stump of wood up its arse.

Albert sat brushing his bowler hat with his right-hand sleeve, making an anti-clockwise motion around the crown and brim. Those who'd known him for years could see how suffering had thinned his face, lined his forehead, and deepened the vulnerable look in his eyes. Yet they wouldn't have admitted that he had anything to suffer about. Hadn't he got house, grub, clothes, half pint, and even a dog? But whatever it was, the expression and the features (by now you couldn't tell where one ended and the other began) made him seem wiser and gentler than he was, certainly a different man to the knockabout young collier he'd been up to not too long ago.

He indicated the dog: "He's got his uses, though."

The railwayman held up a crisp from his packet, and the animal waited for it to drop. "As long as it's obedient. That's all you want

from a dog."

"It'll have your hand off, if you don't drop that crisp," Albert told him. The railwayman took the hint, and let it fall under a stool. The crunch was heard, because everyone was listening for it.

"As long as it's faithful, as well," a woman at the next table put in. You were never alone with a dog, he thought. Everybody was bound to remark on it before long.

"A dog's got to be faithful to its owner," she said. "It'll be obedient all right, if it's faithful."

"It's a help to me," Albert admitted, "even though it does get on my nerves."

"Nerves!" she called out. "What nerves? You ain't got nerves, have you?"

She'd tricked him squarely, by hinting that some disease like worms was gnawing at his insides.

"I'm not mental, if that's what you mean." Since he didn't know from her voice whether she was friendly or not, he looked at her more closely, smiling that she had to scoff at his nerves before his eyes became interested in her.

The dog came back from its crisp. "Gerrunder!" he told it harshly to prove that his nerves were as strong as the next person's.

Her homely laugh let him know that such a thing as strong nerves might certainly be possible with him, after all. She had a short drink of gin or vodka in front of her, and a large flat white handbag. There was also an ashtray on the table at which she flicked ash from her cigarette, even when there seemed to be none on its feeble glow, as if trying to throw the large ring on her finger into that place as well. Her opened brown fur coat showed a violet blouse underneath. He'd always found it hard to tell a woman's age, but in this case thought that, with such short greying hair fluffed up over her head, she must be about fifty.

"Let him know who's boss," she said.

He felt the golfballs in his overcoat pocket. "I expect he wants his supper. I'll be getting him home soon."

Her hard jaw was less noticeable when she spoke. "Don't let him run your life."

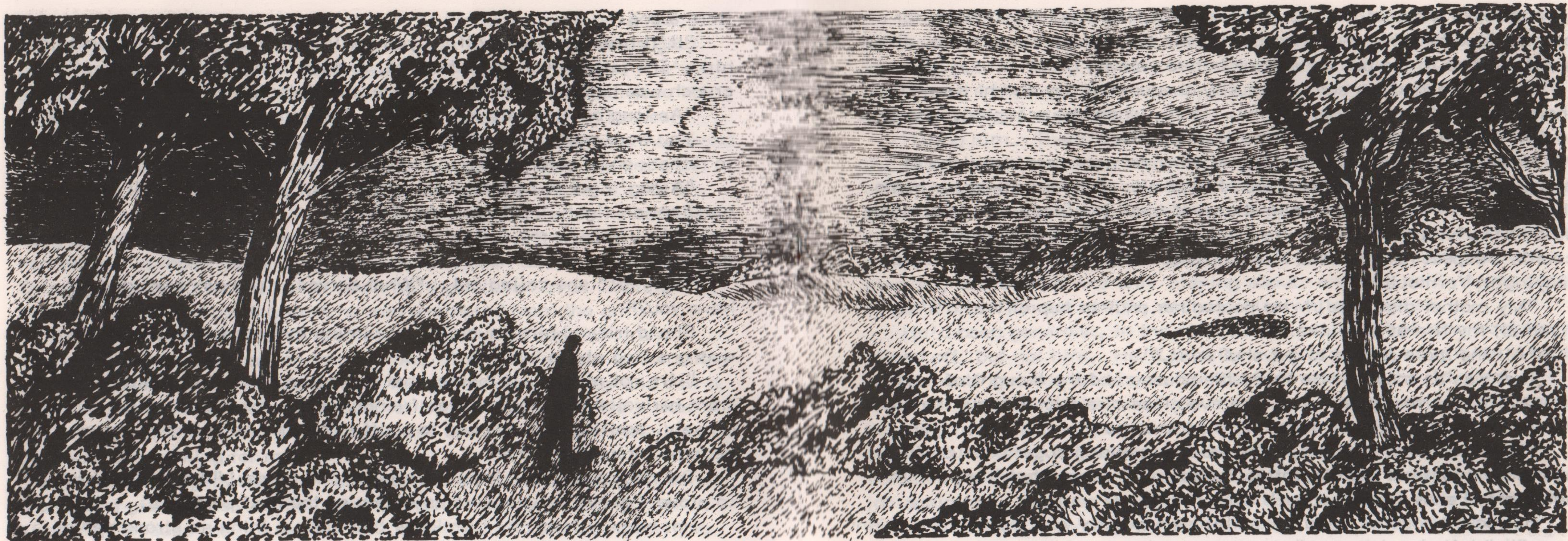
"He don't do that. But he's fussy."

He observed that she had mischief in her eyes as well as in her words. "I say it is. Are you a local man?"

"Have been all my life," he told her.

She stood up. "I'll have another gin before I go. Keeps me warm when I get to bed."

He watched her stop at the one-armed bandit, stare at the fruit signs as if to read her fortune there, then put a couple of shillings through the mill. Losing, she jerked her head, and ordered the drinks, then said



something to the men at the bar that made them laugh.

"You needn't a done that," Albert said, when she set a pint of best bitter down for him. "I never have more than half a jar."

He needed it, by the look of him, this funny-seeming bloke whom she couldn't quite fathom - which was rare for her when it came to men. She was intrigued by the reason for him being set apart from the rest of them in the pub. It was obvious a mile off that he lived alone, but he tried to keep himself smart, all the same, and that was rare.

She pushed the jar an inch closer. "It'll do you good. Didn't you ever get away in the army?"

"No."

"Most men did."

The dog nudged his leg, but he ignored it. Piss on the floor if you've got to. He'd go home when he was ready. "I was a collier, and missed all that."

She drank her gin in one quick flush. "No use nursing it. I only have a couple, though. I kept a boarding house in Yarmouth for twenty years. Now I'm back in Nottingham. I sometimes wonder why I came back."

"You must like it," he suggested.

"I do. And I don't." She saw the dog nudge him this time. "Has it got worms, or something?"

"Not on the hasty-pudding he gets from me. He's a bit nervous, though. I expect that's why he gets on my nerves."

He hadn't touched his pint.

"Aren't you going to have that?"

"I can't sup all of it."

She thought he was only joking. "I'll bet you did at one time."

When his face came alive it took ten years off his age, she noticed.

He laughed. "I did, an' all!"

"I'll drink it, if you don't."

"You're welcome." He smiled at the way she was bossing him, and picked up the jar of ale to drink.

Sometimes, when it was too wet and dreary to go to the golf course, he'd sit for hours in the dark, the dog by his side to be conveniently cursed for grating his nerves whenever it scratched or shifted. At such times he might not know whether to go across the yard for a piss, or get



up and make a cup of tea. But occasionally he'd put the light on for a moment and take twenty pence from under the tea-caddy on the scullery shelf, and go to the pub for a drink before closing time.

If he'd cashed his social security cheque that day and he saw Alice there, he'd offer to get her a drink. Once, when she accepted, she said to him afterwards: "Why don't we live together?"

He didn't answer, not knowing whether he was more surprised at being asked by her, or at the idea of it at all. But he walked her home that night. In the autumn when she went back to his place with him she said: "You've got to live in my house. It's bigger than yours." You couldn't expect her to sound much different after donkeys' years landladying in Yarmouth.

"My mother died here." He poured her another cup of tea. "I've lived all my life at 28 Hinks Street!"

"All the more reason to get shut on it."

That was as maybe. He loved the house, and the thought of having to leave it was real pain. He'd be even less of a man without the house. Yet he felt an urge to get out of it, all the same.

"So if you want to come," she said, not taking sugar because it spoiled the taste of her cigarette, "you can. I mean what I say. I'm not flighty Fanny Fernackerpan!"

He looked doubtful, and asked himself exactly who the hell she might be. "I didn't say you was."

She wondered when he was going to put the light on, whether or no he was saving on the electricity. He hadn't got a telly, and the old wireless on the sideboard had a hole in its face. A dead valve had dust on it. Dust on all of us. She'd picked a winner all right, but didn't I always? The place looked clean enough, except it stank of the dog a bit. "Not me, I'm not."

"There's not only me, though," he said. "There's two of us."

She took another Craven "A" from her handbag, and dropped the match in her tea-saucer, since it seemed he didn't use ashtrays. "You mean your dog?"

He nodded.

Smoke went towards the mantleshelf. "There's two of us, as well."

Here was a surprise. If she'd got a dog they'd have to call it off. He was almost glad to hear it. Or perhaps it was a cat. "Who's that, then?"

"My son, Raymond. He's twenty-two, and not carat gold, either. He's a rough diamond, you might say, but a good lad - at heart."

She saw she'd frightened him, but it was better now than later. "He's the apple of my eye," she went on, "but not so much that you can't come in and make a go of it with me. With your dog as well, if you like."

If I like! What sort of language was that? He was glad he'd asked her to come to his house after the pub, otherwise he wouldn't know where to put his face, the way she was talking. "The dog's only a bit o' summat I picked off the street, but I wouldn't part with him. He's been company, I suppose."

"Bring him. There's room. But I've always wanted a man about the house, and I've never had one." Not for long enough, anyway. She told him she might not be much to look at (though he hadn't properly considered that, yet) but that she had been at one time, when she'd worked as a typist at the stocking factory. It hadn't done her much good because the gaffer had got her pregnant. O yes, she'd known he was married, and that he was only playing about, and why not? It was good to get a bit of fun out of life, and was nice while it lasted.

He'd been generous, in the circumstances. A lot of men would have slived off, but not him. He'd paid for everything and bought her a house at Yarmouth (where he'd taken her the first weekend they'd slept together: she didn't hide what she meant) so that she could run it as a boarding house and support herself. The money for Raymond came separate, monthly till he was sixteen. She saved and scraped and invested for twenty years, and had a tidy bit put by, though she'd got a job again now, because she didn't have enough to be a lady of leisure, and in any case everybody should earn their keep, so worked as a receptionist at a motoring school. I like having a job. I mean, I wouldn't be very interesting without a job, would I? Raymond works at the Argus Factory on a centre lathe - not a capstan lathe, because anybody can work one of them after an hour - but a proper big centre lathe. She'd seen it when she went in one day to tell the foreman he'd be off for a while with bronchitis - and to collect his wages. He was a clever lad at mechanics and engineering, even if he had left school at sixteen. He made faglighters and candlesticks and doornobs on the Q.T.

He could see that she liked to talk, to say what she wanted out of life, and to tell how she'd got where she was - wherever that was. But he liked her, so it must have been somewhere. When she talked she seemed to be in some other world, but he knew she wouldn't be feeling so free and enjoying it so much if he hadn't been sitting in front to take most of it in. She'd had a busy life, but wanted somebody to listen to her, and to look as if what she was saying meant something to them both. He could do that right enough, because hadn't he been listening to himself all his life? Be a change hearing somebody else, instead of his own old record.

"There's a garden for your dog, as well, at my place. He won't get run over there. And a bathroom in the house, so you won't have to cross the yard when you want to piddle, like you do here."

He'd guessed as much, looking at it from the outside when he'd

walked her home but hadn't gone in. It was a bay-windowed house at Hucknall with a gate and some palings along the front.

"It's all settled then, duck?"

"I'll say yes." It felt like jumping down a well you couldn't see the bottom of. He couldn't understand why he felt so glad at doing it.

She reached across to him. He had such rough strong hands for a man who took all night to make up his mind. Still, as long as there was somebody else to make it up for him there'd be no harm done.

"Every old sock finds an old shoe!" she laughed.

"A damned fine way of putting it!"

"It's what a friend at work said when I told her about us."

He grunted.

"Cheer up! She was only joking. As far as I'm concerned we're as young as the next lot, and we're as old as we feel. I always feel about twenty, if you want to know the truth. I often think I've not started to live yet."

He smiled. "I feel that, as well. Funny, in't it?"

She liked how easy it was to cheer him up, which was something else you couldn't say for every chap.

He polished his black boots by first spreading a dab of Kiwi with finger and rag: front, back, sides and laces; then by plying the stiff-bristled brush till his arms ached, which gave them a dullish black-lead look. He put them on for a final shine, lifting each foot in turn to the chair for a five-minute energetic duffing so that he could see his face in them. You couldn't change a phase of your life without giving your boots an all-round clean; and in any case, his face looked more interesting to him reflected in the leather rather than staring back from the mirror over the fireplace.

A large van arrived at half past eight from the best removal firm in town. She knew how to do things, he'd say that for her. Your breakfast's ready, she would call, but he might not want to get up, and then where would they be? Dig the garden, she'd say, and he'd have no energy. What about getting a job? she'd ask. Me and Raymond's got one, and you're no different to be without. I'm having a bit of a rest, he'd say. I worked thirty years at the pit face before I knocked off. Let others have a turn. I've done my share - till I'm good and ready to get set on again. She was the sort who could buy him a new tie, and expect him to wear it whether he liked it or not. Still, he wouldn't be pleased if he took her a bunch of flowers and she complained about the colour. You didn't have to wear flowers, though.

He stood on the doorstep and watched the van come up the street. There was no doubt that it was for him. With thinning hair well parted, and bowler hat held on his forearm, he hoped it would go by, but

realised that such a thing at this moment was impossible. He didn't want it to, either, for after a night of thick dreams that he couldn't remember he'd been up since six, packing a suitcase and cardboard boxes with things he didn't want the removal men to break or rip. He'd been as active as a bluebottle that spins crazily to try and stop itself dying after the summer's gone.

When you've moved in with me we'll have a honeymoon, she'd joked. Our room's ready for us, though we'll have to be a bit discreet as far as our Raymond's concerned. They would, as well. He'd only kissed her in fun the other night, but it had knocked Raymond all of a heap for the rest of his short stay there. He'd seen that she was a well-made woman, and that she'd be a treat to sleep with. He hadn't been with anyone since before his mother died, but he felt in need of a change now. I'll have to start living again, he told himself, and the thought made him feel good.

The dog's whole body and all paws touched the slab of the pavement as if for greater security on this weird and insecure morning. "Now don't you start getting on my bleddy nerves," he said as the van pulled up and the alerted animal ran into the house, then altered its mind and came out again. "That's the last thing I want."

He wondered if it would rain. Trust it to rain on a day like this. It didn't look like rain, though wasn't it supposed to be a good sign if it did? What was he doing, going off to live in a woman's house at his age? He didn't know her from Adam, though he'd known people get together in less than the three months they'd known each other. Yet he had never wanted to do anything so much in his life before as what he was doing now, and couldn't stop himself even if he wanted to. It was as if he had woken up from a dream of painful storms, into a day where, whatever the weather, the sun shone and he could breathe again. He smiled at the clouds, and put his hat on.

But if that was so, why had he got a scab on his lip? He'd been running the gamut of a cold a week ago, and had expected it to be all over by now. Maybe the cold had been operating at his innards even a week before that, and had twisted his senses so much that only it and not his real self was responsible for leading him into this predicament. He was disturbed by the possibility of thinking so. Yet because he wasn't put out by the impending split-up and change he'd rather think it than worry that he'd been taken over by something outside his control. You couldn't have everything, and so had to be grateful for the bit of good to be got out of any situation, whether you'd done it all on your own, or whether it was the work of God or the Devil.

"This is it, George," the driver called to his mate's ear only a foot away in the cab. "I'll pull on to the pavement a bit. Less distance then to carry his bits of rammel."

He heard that remark, but supposed they'd say it about every house unless it was some posh place up Mapperley or West Bridgford. Maybe the dog caught it as well, for it stood stiffly as the cab door banged and they came towards the house.

"Get down, you bleddy ha'porth, or you'll get on my nerves!"

The dog, with the true aerials of its ears, detected the trouble and uncertainty of Albert's soul, something which Albert couldn't acknowledge because it was too much hidden from him at this moment, and would stay so till some days had passed and the peril it represented had gone. The dog's whine, as it stood up with all sensitivities bristling, seemed to be in full contact with what might well have troubled Albert if he'd had the same equipment. Albert knew it was there, though, and realised also that the dog had ferreted it out, as usual, which lent some truth to his forceful assertion that it was already beginning to get on his bleddy nerves.

The dog went one way, then spun the other. All nerves, and no breeding, Albert thought, watching the two men stow his belongings in the van. It didn't take long. They didn't even pull their jackets off when they came in for the preliminary survey. It was a vast contraption they'd brought to shift him to Hucknall, and had clearly expected more than two chairs, a table, wardrobe and bed. There'd been more when his mother was alive, but he'd sold the surplus little by little to the junk shop for a bob or two at a time. It was as if he'd broken off bits of himself like brittle toffee and got rid of it till there was only the framework of a midget left. That was it. His dream had been about that last night. He remembered being in a market place, standing on a stage before a crowd of people. He had a metal hammer with which he hit at his fingers and hand till the bits flew, and people on the edge of the crowd leapt around to grab them, stuffing them into their mouths and clamouring for more. This pleased him so much that he continued to hammer at his toes and arms and legs and - finally - his head.

Bloody fine thing to dream about. All his belongings were stowed aboard, but the terrified dog had slid to the back of the gas stove and wouldn't come out. "You get on my bleddy nerves, you do," he called. "Come on, come away from there."

It was dim, and in the glow of a match he saw the shivering flank of the dog pressed against the greasy skirting board. He looked for an old newspaper to lie on, and drag it out, not wanting to get his overcoat grimy. It was damned amazing, the grit that collected once you took your trappings away, not to mention nails coming through the lino that he hadn't noticed before.

"Come on, mate," the van driver called, "we've got to get cracking. Another job at eleven."

There wasn't any newspaper, so he lay in his overcoat, and spoke

to it gently, ignoring the hard bump of something in his pocket: "Come on, my old duck, don't let me down. There's a garden to run in where you're going. Mutton bones as well, if I know owt. They'll be as soft as steak! Be a good lad, and don't get on my nerves at a time like this."

The men in the van shouted again, but he took no notice, his eyes squinting at the dim shape of the dog at the back of the stove. It looked so settled, so finally fixed, so comfortable that he almost envied it. He wanted to diminish in size, and crawl in to join it, to stay there in that homely place forever. We'd eat woodlice and blackclocks and the scrapings of stale grease till we got old together and pegged out, or till the knockdown gangs broke up the street and we got buried and killed. Make space for me and let me come in. I won't get on your nerves. I'll lay quiet as a mouse, and sleep most of the time.

His hand shot out to grab it, as he'd pulled it many a time through a hedge by the golf course: "Come out, you bleddy tike. You get on my nerves!"

A sudden searing rip at his knuckles threw them back against his chest.

"Leave it, mate," the man in the doorway laughed. "You can come back for it. We ain't got all day."

Standing up in the case the dog leapt at his throat, he banged his head on the gas stove. He belonged in daylight, on two feet, with blood dripping from his hand, and a bruise already botching his forehead.

"Smoke the bogger out," the driver advised. "That'll settle its 'ash."

He'd thought of it, and considered it, but it would smoke him out as well. Whatever he did to the dog he did to himself. It seemed to be a problem no one could solve, him least of all.

"It's obstinate, in't it?" the younger one observed.

"Go on, fume it out," urged the driver. "I'd bleddy kill it if it was mine. I'd bleddy drown it, I would."

Albert leaned against the opposite wall. "It ain't yourn, though. It's got a mind of its own." It was an effort to speak. I'll wring its neck.

"Some bleddy mind," remarked the driver, cupping his hand to light a cigarette, as if he were still in the open air.

"I can't leave it," Albert told them.

"What we'll do, mate," the driver went on, "is get your stuff to Hucknall, and unload it. You can come on later when you've got your dog out. And if I was you, I'd call in at the chemist's and get summat put on that bite while you're about it. Or else you'll get scabies."

"Rabies," his mate said. "Not fucking scabies."

"Scabies or rabies or fucking babies, I don't care. But he'd better get summat purronit, I know that fucking much!"

Albert's predicament enraged them more than it did him, and certainly more than the dog. The only consolation came at being glad the dog wasn't doing to them what it was to him. He heard the tailgate slam during their argument, the lynchpins slot in, the cab doors bang, and all he owned driven away down the street. There wasn't even a chair to sit on, not a stick, nothing on the walls, nothing, only himself and the dog, and that crumbling decrepit gas stove that she'd said he could leave behind because it couldn't be needed anywhere.

He sat on the floor against the opposite wall, feeling sleepy and waiting for the dog to emerge. "Come on, you daft bogger, show yourself. You get on my nerves, behaving like this." But there was no hurry. It could stay till it got dark for all he cared. He'd sat out worse things with similar patience. No, it wasn't true that he had, because the ten hours by the body of his mother had passed like half a minute. That was three years ago. He felt as if he had no memory anymore. He didn't need one. If everything that had happened to you seemed as if it had happened yesterday you didn't need to dwell too much on the past. It didn't do you any good, and in any case it was just as well not to because as you got older, things got worse.

It was daylight, but it felt as if he were sitting in the dark. The dog hadn't stirred. Maybe it was dead, and yet what had it got to die for? He'd fed it and housed it, and now it was playing this dirty trick on him. It didn't want to leave. Well, nobody did, did they? He didn't want to leave, and that was a fact, but a time came when you had to. You had to leave or you had to sink into the ground and die. And he didn't want to die. He wanted to live. He knew that, now. He wanted to live with this nice woman who had taken a fancy to him. He felt young again because he wanted to leave. If he'd known earlier that wanting to change your life made you feel young he'd have wanted to leave long before now. Anybody with any sense would, but he hadn't been able to. The time hadn't come, but now it had, the chance to get out of the tunnel he'd been lost in since birth.

But the dog was having none of it. After all he'd done for it - to turn on him like this! Would you credit it? Would you just! You had to be careful what you took in off the street.

"Come on out, you daft bogger!" When it did he'd be half-minded to kick its arse for biting him like that. He wrapped his clean handkerchief around the throbbing wound, spoiling white linen with the blood. She'd asked if it was faithful when they'd first met in the pub: "It'll be obedient all right, as long as it's faithful," she had said. Like hell it was. If you don't come from under that stove I'll turn the gas on. Then we'll see who's boss.

No, I won't, so don't worry, my owd duck. He lay down again near the stove, and extended his leg underneath to try and push it sideways.

He felt its ribs against the sole. What a damned fine thing! It whined, and then growled. He drew his boot away, not wanting the trousers of his suit ripped. He sat again by the opposite wall, as if to get a better view of his downfall. The world was coming to an end. It's my head I'll put in the gas oven, not the dog's. Be a way to get free of everything.

The idea of shutting all doors and windows, and slowly turning on each brass tap, and lying down never to wake up, enraged him with its meaningless finality. If he died who would regret that he had disappeared? Especially if, as was likely, he and the dog went together. His heart bumped with anger, as if he'd just run half a mile. He wanted to stand up and take the house apart brick by brick and beam by rotten beam, to smash his fist at doors and floors and windows, and fireplaces in which the soot stank now that the furniture had gone.

"I'll kill you!" He leapt to his feet: "I'll kill yer! I'll spiflicate yer!" - looking for some loose object to hurl at the obstinate dog because it was set on spoiling his plans, rending his desires to shreds. He saw himself here all day, and all night, and all next week, unable to lock the door and leave the dog to starve to death as it deserved.

His hat was placed carefully on the least gritty part of the floor, and his hand drew back from it on realising that if he put it on he would walk out and leave the dog to die. It's either him or me, he thought, baffled as to why life should be that way. But it was, and he had really pulled back the hand to wipe his wet face, his tears in tune with the insoluble problem.

He leapt to his feet, full of a wild energy, not knowing whether he would smash his toffee head to pieces at the stationary hammer of the stove, or flee into the daylight. He spun, almost dancing with rage. Feeling deep into his pocket, he took out something that he hadn't known was there because it had slipped through a hole into the lining. He dropped on to his haunches and hurled it at the dog under the stove with all his strength: "I'll kill you, you bleeder!"

It missed, and must have hit the skirting wood about its head. It ricocheted, shooting back at an angle to the wall near the door. He couldn't believe it, but the dog leapt for it with tremendous force, propelled like a torpedo after the golfball that he'd unthinkingly slung at it.

Albert, his senses shattered, stood aside for a good view, to find out what was really going on on this mad day. The dog's four paws skidded on the lino as the ball clattered away from the wall and made a line under its belly. Turning nimbly, it chased it across the room in another direction, trying to corner it as if it were a live thing. Its feet again sent it rattling out of range.

There'd be no more visits to the golf course tating for stray balls.

The dog didn't know it, but he did, that he'd as like as not be saying goodbye to his tears and getting a job somewhere. After his few dead years without one, he'd be all the better for the continual pull at his legs and muscles. Maybe the dog knew even more than he did, and if it did, there was nothing either of them could do about it.

The dog got the ball gently in its teeth, realising from long experience that it must leave no marks there if the object was to make Albert appreciate its efforts. It came back to him, nudging his legs to show what it had got.

His boot itched to take a running kick at the lousy pest. "That's the last time you get on my bleddy nerves, and that's straight."

It was, he thought, the last time I get on my own. It wasn't a case anymore of a man and his dog, but of a man and the woman he was going to. He bent down to take the gift of the ball from its mouth, but then stopped as if the shaft of cunning had at last gone into him. No, don't take it, he told himself. You don't know what it'll get up to if you do. Without the familiar golfball in its trap it'll run back to its hideaway. Maybe he'd learned a thing or two. He'd certainly need to be sharper in the situation he was going to than he'd been for the last few years.

He straightened up, and walked to the door. "Let's get after that van, it's got all our stuff on board." He raised his voice to its usual pitch: "Come on, mek yer bleddy 'eels crack, or we'll never get everything done."

With the golfball still in its mouth there was no telling where it would follow him. To the ends of the earth, he didn't wonder, though the earth had suddenly got small enough for him not to be afraid of it anymore, and to follow himself there as well.

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# Theatre Royal: half-way there

ROBERT CULLEN

THE PLAYHOUSE WAS BUILT DURING the last phase of post-war idealism as a "people's theatre". That enthusiasm has evaporated - or its objectives have been elevated (depending on your point of view) to inspire the middle classes, who need invigorating occasionally by observations on "the people" (who, by and large, would view such so-called plays as a load of rubbish). The new Theatre Royal has no such pretensions. Straight in with Ken Dodd and a bit of fun. It is an oddball from conception to operation.

The original Theatre Royal, completed in 1865, was created with similar aspirations to that of the Playhouse, to uplift the miserable sinners, the populace, to better things - I know not what. A splendid, substantial, 1,800 seat, red plush and cherubic popular theatre was created, which has survived where many have fallen, and has now been renovated and restored and will continue to survive: it is difficult to write off a recently invested £4 million or so.

Of course, the Theatre Royal conservation was seen by John Carroll and his colleagues as only part of a grand concept for a Festival Hall. Councillor Carroll can take a major part of the credit for pulling together many strands of interest - operatic, concert, conservation etc. Road widening, excruciating improvements, bombs and general apathy had produced a large, nearly vacant, central area site with a listed building on it. The Civic Society, interested in conserving the Theatre and the County Hotel, was told that the County Hotel would have to be demolished: it could not sensibly be converted into dressing-rooms, and a major access to the stage was essential through it, if the economies of a grand design site (continuous foyers, bars, life at night, public space etc.) were to be achieved. The Society was divided in its views. The President, Maurice Barley, and myself were for the grand design. The majority was against. It is interesting now to review the arguments.

John Carroll's line - and he and his advisers convinced me - argued that there was a demand, there was a site, and there was the money. Why not get on with it, particularly in the middle of a depression? Create employment now and have a superb complex at the end of the day. After all, he argued, that that was how the Council House got built. Convincing stuff. The antis argued: spend the money on housing - or don't spend it, when we can't really afford it - and make do with the existing auditoria; save the County Hotel because it is a part of historic Notting-ham, restore the Theatre Royal, and build up the remainder of the site as



Signs, railings, underpasses, their ugliness highlighted by the quality of the restoration and new building.

and when economic and social pressures have created the right circumstances. Who was right? Both were, as can be seen by what has happened.

What about the future? Should the site be reserved for the completion of the Festival Hall? I think the answer must be yes. At least until other more voluble pressure groups enter the arena. Perhaps they will be able to sort it all out in 1980 with a gladiatorial contest in the outside amphitheatre recently suggested on the vacant site. What about the present? Undoubtedly, we now have a splendid auditorium made less splendid (the real plush has gone) but very much more comfortable for spectators and players alike. The restoration has been sensitively done, but to me lacks the vitality, verve and excitement expressed in the old auditorium. Sensitive, refined, elegant, subtle shades of green, chandeliers - but character? I think not, though it is difficult to judge at this early stage.

Architecturally, the project is extremely interesting. It is very difficult to criticise it, because it is only Phase 1 of a much larger concept for a complete island site to be seen in the round, an object to be seen from the surrounding streets and not providing a street frontage. Paradoxically, it is this grand concept which could be the basis for all serious criticism of the development. The architecture has suffered primarily because it has not been related to a Town Plan. Once upon a

time, until the advent of the motor car, we used to build buildings as part of a street, square, place or park, and it is those streets (e.g. High Pavement), squares (e.g. the Old Market Square), places (e.g. Wellington Circus), parks (e.g. the Forest) which today form the nucleus of our cities. Were the architects right in breaking down the streets by the demolition of the County Hotel, and should they, if they were right in abandoning the street pattern, have created a new square or place as well as just a building on an island site? My answer to all these questions is simple - they have failed. However, if you accept the basic concept behind the scheme, then there can be little quarrel with what has been achieved.

A more conventional architectural criticism, ignoring urban design, would be less dismissive, because a great deal of effort and love has gone into the detailed design. The new building is interesting in form, and exploits the existing portico to full advantage. The advantages of the old theatre have been expressed and exploited with respect and affection. It is easy to criticise the interior designer for having to try fourteen times (a story no doubt enriched by the telling) before she thought she had got it right. The point is she did try to get it right. Colour is, of course, a very subjective subject. My wife thought the greens were terrific. I would have liked some vermilion and gold leaf. But undoubtedly it is the best colour scheme of the 1970s that I have seen in the city and county of Nottingham.

There are many fine and interesting features incorporated: handrail whirls, horizontal sill windows looking down on the heads of people on the pavement below, beautiful seats and screens in the gods. All in all, a great place to have a drink or a cup of coffee or to assemble and get into the right theatrical mood. The auditorium has been sensitively restored and improved. The lines and sweeps of the balconies and boxes have been beautifully resolved. The chandelier is the best modern chandelier I have seen, and the lighting and signing is carefully chosen in period and character with the auditorium. The provision for the actors and stage staff is tremendous, with plenty of space. The Theatre Royal always did have one of the largest stages in the country, and now it is even better, with showers, baths, modern equipment etc. The feeling is still a bit raw, but this will improve with time and use, and stickers, photos, posters, paint and powder, so that it feels and smells like backstage.

Externally, the white mosaic curved walls are interesting in form, and contrast well with the portico. However, as a satisfactory formula for continuation round the whole site if the Festival Hall is resuscitated, then there remain some doubts. Any project stopped half way through gives an opportunity for reassessment, and this is a challenge for the architects. Will their concept stand up to self-criticism? Another

aspect of the design which needs further consideration is the general setting for the theatre. I found the theatre very difficult to photograph without a jumble of signposts and impedimenta getting in the way, and the approaches through underpasses are depressing. One bit of design done well shows up the sheer ugliness of the 1960s engineers' aesthetic.

The real problem remaining is what should happen to the rest of the site. Does Nottingham need, and can it pay for, a large general-purpose concert hall? And, just as important, can it maintain the subsidies in the future? If we are going to do it, let's get on with it. Even in the short term, we should clear the remaining buildings and pave and plant the whole area with what I call the Champs-Élysées technique: Breedon gravel, tarmac paths and plane trees - transplanted as large as possible. Cecil Howitt (architect to the Council House and the Technical College) always dreamed of a square in front of his main entrance to the Tech.

I would like to express my gratitude and congratulations to all those involved in the restoration of the Theatre Royal. Nottingham is a richer and more exciting place to live in and visit because of them. Well done!



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# Rebels, experts and zombies

## Peter Palmer gives a personal view

HATS, CAPS AND BONNETS off to the Daily Telegraph's composer-cum-critic Anthony Payne for writing the following in a Festival Hall review: "Predictably, the audience was not a capacity one, but there is more than one kind of successful concert, occupied seats being only one unit of measurement, while the orchestra deserves congratulations for determinedly aiming at a less easily attained success, the unpredictable programme that does not pander to thoughtless habit and educates as well as entertains."

To most of us, unfortunately, "education" (meaning "a drawing out") smacks of blackboard and chalk. I propose instead - exasperated as I am by reminders that "we all have our likes and dislikes, dear" - that we envisage a listener's musical education as a school of feeling. The Strauss family's waltzes have earned a niche in European culture, but are we therefore to let perpetual 3/4 time erase the qualitative difference between a Johann Strauss waltz and a Bruckner symphony? Or, for that matter, between a Bruckner and a Mahler symphony?

As a ratepayer, I'm as concerned as the next man about the spending of public money on leisure and culture - not that subsidies are so lavish in Britain. Amusements pure and simple should be able to reap their own reward. If the best "light" music is now failing to do so, that's a sad reflection on mindless habits. If today's most gifted "serious" composers have an even rougher time of it, then the explanation could be sought in a decadent society which treats music as one luxury consumer-object among others.

For, on the face of it, music's universal language should be enjoying a heyday in a democracy where the "good things of life" are increasingly available to all. (By democratisation I understand a levelling-up process; at present we may be witnessing a spiritual levelling-down in many respects.) To the objection that modern musical structures are beyond the "ordinary" listener's grasp, the American conductor Paul Freeman gave a blunt answer on his last Nottingham visit: "Denkfaulheit" (mental sloth). Prejudice, here, creates a greater barrier to appreciation than a complete lack of formal musical training. (As for "ordinary people", it's as well to beware of that catchpenny slogan. Human beings are extraordinary.)

True, there seems to be a merely provocative art around. But this itself is a symptom of existing tensions between the artist and society, not the cause of those tensions. It would, in my view, be disastrous if

the keepers of public funds pursued a divisive policy which is becoming more and more in evidence. The policy, that is, of laying on "popular" concerts for the zombie who likes what he "knows" on the one hand, and "esoteric" events for the equally pitiable fashion expert or social rebel on the other.

The root problem, perhaps, is neither wholly musical nor sociological: it's a lack of faith in our future. But, against the odds, there are still composers spinning within themselves patterns of initially daunting, but life-enhancing organised sound. Pay more than lip service to them, and they will succeed in enlarging our imaginative sympathies, in "drawing us out" of our Philistine shells.

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## STEWART BROWN

### Skills

Great grandad baked bread for a village,  
 kneaded thick dough as a pianist practises scales.  
 His fat self-advertisement proclaimed  
 a technique that never failed.

His son laid bricks, made roofs,  
 could shape a fancy chimney breast.  
 A snail of a man he lived inside his work,  
 now other people do.

My father works sheet metal.  
 With files and saws and fifty types of hammer  
 his hands and eye judge steel down to a thou'  
 and his work flies, holds the world up.

So what can I do?  
 I can't explain it to my forebears  
 who knew precisely how and why and for whom  
 they sweated and perfected their skills.

I sit in this dull room scratching  
 obscure marks on precious paper. Producing nothing.  
 Struggling like some slick apprentice  
 who's learnt the theory, knows all the tricks

but gets stuck with a real job to do.  
 Gingerly I push my luck.  
 This inheriting hand holds my pen like a file.  
 Will a poem scrape through?

(A version of this poem appeared in New Poetry 3, published by the Arts Council.)

## DERRICK BUTTRESS

### The skull of Dante Alighieri

This, ladies and gentlemen,  
is the skull of Dante Alighieri,  
containing in its bony stillness  
a perfect cosmos.

Note, too, the shattered sockets  
and the splintered brow  
caused, according to contemporary report,  
by the heat engendered in feeling too much  
and too long, though others say it was the velocity  
of that mad journey through seven planets  
and several motionless stars  
that caused the fatal burning.

Those who have touched the skull  
speak of the coolness of pearl  
and the faint vibration of fanned wings.  
When I lift the domestic glass  
under which our skull reclines  
you will catch the aroma of roses  
or singed flesh.

Notice, too, the small hole in the base of the skull  
from which a world poured out.  
Some say the brains gushed from that hole at death  
like boiling porridge: but the story is apocryphal.  
What is certain is our possession of this  
true semblance, the vera icona of the dead dream,  
held here for a limited period during the  
summer months.

No, madam, there is no sign from Beatrice.  
She, like the rest of our poet  
lies deep in earth,  
dust sifted down to the lowest levels  
by seasonal rain, or lifted into the wind  
by passing Ferraris on their way to Florence.

## JOAN DOWNAR

### Grandmother

As I approach, I notice  
men digging holes in the ground.  
Her face is ashen bark,  
wrinkled and riven, and that's  
her voice, too, the command  
of a woman long-widowed  
forcing her striplings up.  
She feeds me the family myths:  
magical meeting, seamless  
marriage, helpless deaths,  
and gives me a ring that  
adds up to sixty seasons.  
The resinous phlegm that used  
to hiss in the grate shuttles  
from chest to throat. Never  
marry beneath you, she says,  
and I smile, for the future is hardly  
serious to either of us,  
yet watching her bones, I know  
her face will be mine. I take  
her gnarled hand, the moment  
to go, and over her head  
see men planting trees in the grounds.

### Pub talk

Time was, you knew the hard crust,  
the street with its annual vista of sea,  
gravid women with morals in their apron strings,  
men with an eye on jobs only.

Dead mostly; their children float free  
in a cosmic litter of washing machines  
cars and pills, having lost amid the débris  
the ship that was to take them to the moon.

## MADGE HALES

### Death rattle

The rattle again. The death  
rattle. The laurels  
rap at the window  
let me in, let me in,  
it is winter.

The Yeti winter  
with huge feet of snow.  
The spider stops  
cobwebbing  
flowers brown in a breath,  
winter how I hate you.

The dead end fingers  
of red the blown cheeks  
no Botticelli.  
Rain is pure misery  
to worms and cattle.

Cattle breathe in stalls  
relief of dry straw,  
the milk machine  
cold as death  
on each full teat.

The ill-fitting door  
wails in a meanness  
of cold.  
O what has winter  
to do with me?  
winter, winter.

(Published in the Sunday Times.)

# The case for a concert hall

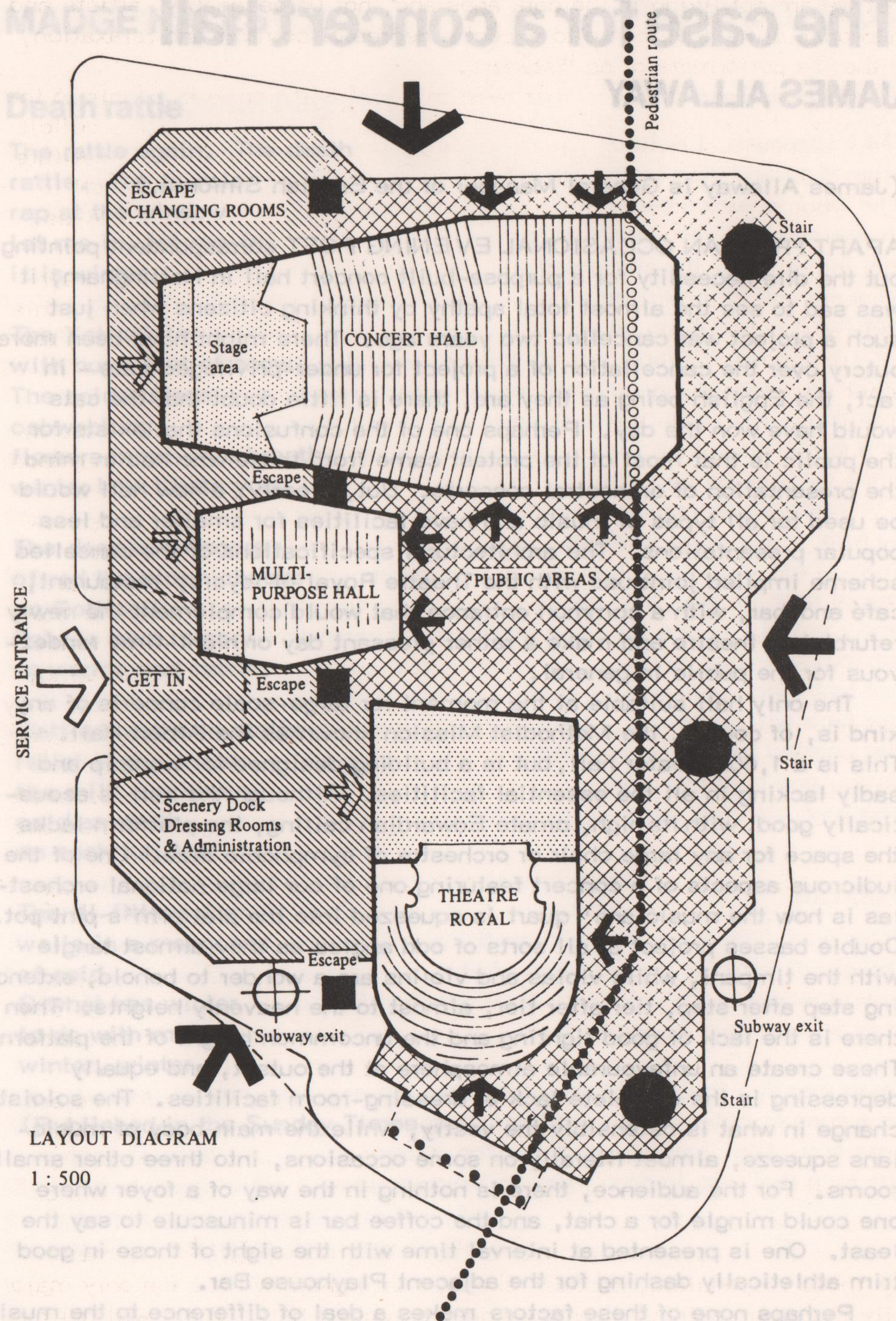
## JAMES ALLAWAY

(James Allaway is General Manager of the English Sinfonia.)

APART FROM AN OCCASIONAL EVENING POST correspondent pointing out the dire necessity for a purpose-built concert hall in Nottingham, it was sad to see the almost total apathy by thinking citizens when just such a project was cancelled two years ago. There might have been more outcry over the cancellation of a project for under-privileged cats - in fact, the English being as they are, there is little doubt that the cats would have won the day. Perhaps one of the confusions that exists for the public is that most of the protest came from those who had in mind the presentation of orchestral concerts. But, clearly, a new hall would be used for all types of music and have facilities for smaller and less popular presentations. The architectural specifications of the cancelled scheme implied joint use with the Theatre Royal of foyers, restaurant, café and bar, with a common entrance that would complement the newly refurbished theatre and make a rather pleasant day or night-time rendezvous for the public in general.

The only hall suitable at the moment for large-scale concerts of any kind is, of course, the Methodist Mission known as the Albert Hall. This is a 1,600-seater hall, but is a building designed for worship and sadly lacking in all the essential facilities. Although the hall is acoustically good, with its high, ornate Edwardian ceiling, the platform lacks the space for any large choir or orchestra of symphonic size. One of the ludicrous aspects of a concert featuring one of our large national orchestras is how the musicians' quart is squeezed into the platform's pint pot. Double basses project at all sorts of odd angles as they almost tangle with the timpani, while violas and violins are a wonder to behold, extending step after step, tier after tier, almost to the heavenly heights. Then there is the lack of good lighting and the uncommon height of the platform. These create an unfavourable atmosphere at the outset, and equally depressing is the complete lack of dressing-room facilities. The soloists change in what is ostensibly the vestry, while the main body of musicians squeeze, almost literally on some occasions, into three other small rooms. For the audience, there is nothing in the way of a foyer where one could mingle for a chat, and the coffee bar is minuscule to say the least. One is presented at interval time with the sight of those in good trim athletically dashing for the adjacent Playhouse Bar.

Perhaps none of these factors makes a deal of difference to the music



LAYOUT DIAGRAM  
1 : 500

but we are not living in the dark ages and, not unreasonably, artists and audience alike have come to expect a degree of comfort and relaxation, either as performers or as listeners.

Good or bad, it seems that even this hall will not be available to the citizens of Nottingham much longer. The trustees, faced with a deficit on the running costs of their ancillary building, the Albert Hall Institute (this, not the Albert Hall proper, is the money loser), wish to sell it off and restructure the main building. Thus, in much the same way as one cinema is made into two or three, they plan to have the offices under the balcony, modernise the entrance area, and carry on all their normal activities under one roof. From the trustees' point of view, this is commendable and entirely the sensible thing to do, although they have deferred their restructuring plans for some two years, aware of their responsibilities as keepers of the only major hall in Nottingham.

However, time seems to be running out. The idea of direct subsidy was vetoed by the City Council recently and, with no direct subsidy from the public purse, there appears to be no alternative but to close the Albert Hall for some months in the summer of next year for the necessary alterations. Thereafter, the Albert Hall will never be the same again: a large number of seats will be taken out to make way for the offices under the balcony, and a drastic reappraisal of letting time will undermine any freedom that promoters have had in the past for a well-ordered sequence of concerts. For example, with the reduced seating, and their expectation of ticket income reduced by a third, promoters may not feel justified in booking the hall on a Monday, a notoriously bad day for concerts.

Clearly, there is an urgent need to commence work on a new concert hall immediately. But why were the plans for such a hall cancelled two years ago? There is no doubt it was a political decision, and not a money-saving exercise as intimated by the then newly elected Conservative council. Various figures have been put about, but it seems that £6 million would have been needed to erect the building. Since the council were already holding most of this money, stopping the project has hardly been a saving for the ratepayers. In addition, there has been no clear indication what was paid out to the hall contractors as a cancellation fee. This may well be in excess of a million pounds. The council's claim to be worried about the running costs of such a project is naturally a legitimate cause for concern, but every thinking person knows such a hall is needed for Nottingham, a rather faded "Queen of the Midlands" at the moment. And what will it cost to build in two or three years' time?

I venture to suggest that some deep thought is given to this matter by those responsible, because shortly Nottingham will be the only major city in Britain without a mass-audience concert hall. There will not be

a suitable main location for the annual festival, and even now most pop groups avoid the city because, for a strictly commercial proposition, they are looking for a 2,000-seater hall. Already the warning signs are upon us. A major British orchestra, the Hallé, has said it will not return to Nottingham because of the lack of facilities at the Albert Hall - bringing a touch of déjà vu, since one of the problems of the old Theatre Royal was blacking by Equity because of the slum conditions of the dressing-rooms. That the theatre was refurbished, as a result of the outgoing Labour council hastily getting the contracts signed, we all have cause to be thankful. Once the work was completed, there were congratulations all round, with no sign of the trauma created beforehand. As the publicity blurb says, the Theatre Royal is now one of the finest theatres in Europe.

The arguments against building a new hall are, of course, numerous, and many an irate ratepayer has written to the Post fuming about all this unnecessary expense. But life is not all council houses, education, or even health services. Anyone will benefit who has ever wanted to see a live music performance, albeit heavy rock, jazz or classical, to say nothing of the odd business conference. The city would have a prestige hall which many people would actually want to visit, initially, just to see - and they would come again. The experience of the Theatre Royal has proved that a new building generates interest as a matter of course. If concert audiences show signs of waning at the present time, I believe a new hall would encourage and stimulate greater numbers. A few miles from Nottingham, the city of Derby has opened just such a hall, part of the new Assembly Rooms. Prior to its opening by the Queen Mother, the complex was threatened with all kinds of delays, including mothballing; but councillors realised that simply by not being open it would lose money, and to everyone's delight it is successful. Money has been found not only by Derby itself - organisations like the Arts Council have also contributed to make sure the complex is a going concern.

I must at this stage declare my interest in a new concert hall, for it is the hope by all involved with the English Sinfonia that this would be the headquarters of the orchestra, in line with our policy of establishing a fully contracted body of musicians in the area. Although a side issue, were this to come about, the full value to the community would be immense. A concert hall will have to become a reality in Nottingham, because it is most definitely needed. But let it not happen by force of circumstance or sheer accident. One recalls that the Playhouse only came into being by a chairman's casting vote. I would like to see interested people from both political parties settling their differences, real or imagined, in order to mount this great project. Future generations will praise the farsightedness of all involved. On a national level, it would go far to defeat the image of a land not only without music but also without concert halls.

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is the regional arts association for Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire (except High Peak), Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and the borough of Milton Keynes

It offers information, advice and financial assistance

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## Notes on contributors

JAMES ALLAWAY has been General Manager of the English Sinfonia for the past five years. After a formal musical education, he served in the Army as a warrant officer with a military band. On leaving the service, he held a variety of posts, and before coming to Nottingham was for four years manager of the Ulster Orchestra in Belfast.

AL ATKINSON teaches print-making in a local art college. He has been involved in the local folksong revival as a singer for more years than he cares to remember.

STEWART BROWN: Born 1951. Studied and worked in Nottingham 1969-75, with a two year break teaching in Jamaica. Poems published in various magazines and anthologies in Britain, USA and the West Indies. Two small pamphlets of poetry, "Beasts" (Outposts), "Room Service" (Falmouth School of Art Publications). Received a Gregory Award in 1976.

DERRICK BUTTRESS worked at Raleigh and in the Lace Market for twenty-five years before taking an English degree at York University. He has just completed a teacher training course at Trent Polytechnic and will be teaching at a local comprehensive school from September. His work includes plays for radio, and his poetry has been widely published and broadcast. His first television play will be broadcast early next year, and he has been commissioned to write a second.

ROBERT CULLEN is a partner in Architects Design Group, Chairman of the Working Party on the Structure Plan for the Nottingham & Nottinghamshire Amenities Society, Vice-Chairman of the Nottingham Civic Society, and joint author of "Nottingham Now".

TREVOR DANN produces BBC Radio Nottingham's tea-time rock shows and also works for the station in the Arts and Features fields. He wrote the successful "Fosse Way", which grew out of an historical series, and compiled the BBC Radio Nottingham Tenth Anniversary souvenir book. Before joining the BBC in 1974, he studied at Nottingham High School and Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge.

JOAN DOWNAR is a librarian turned teacher. She now works in a Nottingham comprehensive school. Her poems have been published in "New Poetry", "Meridian", "Encounter" and the "New Statesman". She appears in "Arts Council New Poetry Anthologies 2 & 3", and in "Contemporary Women Poets" and "Poetry in the Seventies", published by Rondo Press. A slim volume, "River People", was published by Mandeville Press in 1976.

PETE DREDGE is a freelance cartoonist and a regular contributor to "Punch", "Private Eye", "The Times Educational Supplement" and "The Radio Times", as well as other magazines. He studied at Nottingham High School from 1964-71, and then went on to Trent Polytechnic, gaining a Graphic Design Diploma in 1975. He is a member of the Cartoonists Club of Great Britain.

MADGE HALES lives in West Bridgford. She has published two collections of poetry (Chatto & Windus) and a pamphlet (Nottingham University). Her poetry has also appeared in "Poetry Now" and "New Poetry", and in "The Times Literary Supplement", "Encounter", "The Observer", "The Listener" etc. She has also written short stories and satire for BBC Radio 3.

BRIAN LOUGHBROUGH is Nottingham City Council's Arts Director and is responsible for the City Museums. His own interest is in social history. He began his career at the University of Reading Museum of English Rural Life and subsequently became the first curator of the Museum of Lincolnshire Life.

NAVIE BRICK works as a labourer.

GEOFFREY OLDFIELD is a local government officer who combines photography with an interest in local history.

PETER PALMER is a freelance translator whose work has been broadcast on BBC Radio 3. Since 1971, he has been a reviewer for the "Evening Post", "Classical Music Weekly" etc. He directed the English Sinfonia's "Carmen" (to be revived in May 1979), and is librettist of a schools musical by David Machell. He is Administrator and producer for the Nottingham Music Theatre, and Music Organiser of the Festival Fringe Committee.

ALAN SILLITOE was born in Nottingham in 1928 the son of a labourer. He left school at fourteen to work in various Nottingham factories until the age of eighteen, when he served four years in the Royal Air Force as a wireless operator. He published his first novel, "Saturday Night and Sunday Morning", in 1958, after living for six years in France and Majorca. He lives at the moment in Kent, and is working on his latest novel, as well as several other projects.

MIKE WILLIAMS was born in Nottingham, read English at Jesus College, Cambridge, and is now Head of English at Gedling Comprehensive School. He recently directed "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" and "Kennedy's Children" at the Nottingham Theatre Club. He lives in Carlton with a wife, two children, a dog and a rabbit. He is not related, even distantly, to Tennessee Williams.